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THE BOOK COLLECTIONS IN THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF THE POTTSVILLE LIBRARY DISTRICT--A DATE AND SUBJECT DISTRIBUTION STUDY.

BY- BLASINGAME, RALPH AND OTHERS
POTTSVILLE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY, PA.

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THIS EVALUATION OF THE POTTSVILLE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOOK COLLECTIONS ILLUSTRATES THE RELEVANCE OF DATE AND SUBJECT DISTRIBUTION AS A SIGNIFICANT BOOK COLLECTION NORM AND SETS FORTH, IN DETAIL, THE METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES USED IN CONDUCTING THE STUDY. THE SURVEY TEAM DETERMINED DATE AND SUBJECT DISTRIBUTIONS IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE 12 LIBRARIES MAKING UP THE POTTSVILLE LIBRARY DISTRICT BY DEVISING A SAMPLING METHOD WHICH ENTAILED CHECKING SHELFLISTS FOR MOST RECENT COPYRIGHT DATES. THEN A NORM WAS FORMULATED BY SAMPLING THE "STANDARD CATALOG FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES," "FICTION CATALOG," AND "CHILDREN'S CATALOG" FOR DATE DISTRIBUTION. NORMATIVE CURVES RESULTED SHOWING THAT THE MOST RECENT BOOKS ARE THE MOST FREQUENTLY CITED AND THAT FREQUENCY OF CITATION DECLINES FAIRLY REGULARLY WITH AGE. A GENERAL CONDITION OF OLD COLLECTIONS AND LIMITED SUBJECT COVERAGE WAS FOUND. RECOMMENDATIONS INVOLVE (1) MORE SIMILAR INVESTIGATIONS, (2) IMPROVED SELECTION METHODS, (3) DEVELOPING MATURE STANDARDS FOR COLLECTIONS, (4) IMPLEMENTING COLLECTION REJUVENATION AND MAINTENANCE THROUGH A CONTINUOUS STATE LIBRARY-DISTRICT LIBRARY CENTER PROGRAM, (5) DEFINING THE ROLE OF THE SMALL LIBRARY, (6) BUILDING AND COORDINATING THE DISTRICT COLLECTIONS AS A SYSTEM, AND (7) CONDUCTING USE STUDIES AND EXPERIMENTAL BOOK COLLECTION PROGRAMS. THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY ARE PRESENTED IN A SERIES OF BAR CHARTS AND LINE GRAPHS, WITH 3 GRAPHS PRESENTED ON TRANSPARENCIES. THIS DOCUMENT IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM THE POTTSVILLE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY, THIRD AND MARKET STREETS, POTTSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA 17091, FREE OF CHARGE. (JB)

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by

RALPH BLASINGAME
Professor, Graduate Library School
Rutgers, the State University

JAYNE L. HESS
Chief Librarian, Pottsville
Free Public Library

ROBERT J. BONNER
Research Assistant

Pottsville Free Public Library
Pottsville, Pennsylvania

1967

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FOREWORD

This is a report of one of several studies that have been made of the resources of the Pottsville Free Public Library under Title I of the Federal Library Services and Construction Act program. The Pottsville Library is one of thirty state-designated district library centers, serving a district population of 198,000 and 11 local libraries. Pottsville is located in the southern fringe of the Anthracite Region of Pennsylvania. One of the project aims was to measure the impact of the public library in an area which has suffered economic reverses. A second aim was to measure the conditions (particularly conditions of finance) under which the Pottsville Free Public Library could become a more effective district library center within the Pennsylvania library development plan. A third goal was to develop a plan for the improvement of existing facilities within the district, such plan to be consistent with the Pennsylvania library program which presumes that the district library will exert a leadership role rather than serve as the center of an administrative system.

This report is shaped by Mr. Blasingame's prior experience as Pennsylvania State Librarian and subsequent research conducted for this state and others. The interpretation of data is not confined to the Pottsville Library District; rather, the findings are related to the successful implementation of a state-wide system of libraries. Thus, the report may be of interest to anyone concerned with Penn-

sylvania library development, as well as to librarians interested in new approaches to the evaluation of collections.

Robert J. Bonner, Project Research Assistant, conducted the field work in the District and compiled the data for this report. During his field work, he refined and modified the method used. We are indebted to Mr. Robert C. Bader, Sales Promotion Manager, Reading Anthracite Coal Company, for the preparation of the line graphs.

A special word of appreciation is in order for the wholehearted interest and support given by the librarians and boards of directors of the member libraries. A cautionary word is also in order. This is not a critical study, in the sense that any blame is to be attached to persons or organizations as a result. The facts presented here add up to a distressing picture of the collections in the Pottsville Library District. Fortunately, with the hope and stimulus afforded by state and federal aid programs, we don't have to succumb to a state of trauma. The point is to take the painful, long, hard look and then seek to improve the situation. With cooperative action and adequate financial support, we should be able to achieve the standards for collections set forth in this report.

Jayne L. Hess
Chief Librarian
(Project Director)

Pottsville
August 1967

PART ONE

PURPOSE AND ASSUMPTIONS

It has apparently been assumed by public librarians that there is a necessary connection between the size of a book collection and its quality. Proceeding from this assumption, librarians have found it possible to state their standards for collections only in the most general of terms, normally either as a sum total or as a number of books per capita. Periodic review of books with consequent heavy-handed weeding is thus discouraged because it many times prevents the library from reaching the quantitative standards set forth either by professional associations or by such a controlling body as the Pennsylvania State Library.

Dr. Kenneth Beasley, in his recommendations for a statistical reporting system for public libraries, wrote:

> The basic reason requiring the submission of any statistical data for use in a comparative report is that they describe or measure some specific characteristic, in this case the characteristics of a library program. Although it would be helpful, the data need not reveal the ideal or even establish a norm as long as they describe the characteristic precisely and in a consistent and logical manner so that some method of ranking can be developed by the professional librarian which will show such points as "good" or "excellent" or "acceptable."(1)

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1. A Statistical Reporting System for Local Public Libraries, Kenneth E. Beasley. (University Park: Institute of Public Administration, The Pennsylvania State University, 1964), p. 6.

This study originated with the thought that particular information about the subject and age distributions of book collections might point toward a more precise standard. While there is no effort here to determine a norm, there is a definite attempt to suggest the characteristics a norm might have and to assess the various collections one against another. While we can hardly consider this as ideal, it represents a considerable step forward from the examination of the collections against a single quantitative standard otherwise unqualified.

There, to repeat, is no attempt to establish what is ideal because the problem of both subject and age distribution is one which has not been examined often.

In his examination of a group of academic libraries from the standpoint of the age of materials actually used, Fussler[2] established that there is a considerable "obsolescence" of materials, though the patterns of obsolescence do vary from one subject to another. Gosnell's early work in this field[3] dealt with a single subject, and unfortunately subsequent investigators have pretty well ignored this matter. Elizabeth Mueller's study of circulation of books in several branches of the Chicago Public Library[4] suggests that the circulation characteristic (that is to say, the number of times an item circulates within a

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2. Patterns in the Use of Books in Large Research Libraries, Herman H. Fussler and Julian L. Simon. (Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 1961. 283 pp.)

3. "Obsolescence of Books in College Libraries," Charles F. Gosnell, College and Research Libraries 5: 115-125, March 1944.

4. "Are New Books Read More Than Old Ones?" Elizabeth Mueller, Library Quarterly 35: 166-172, July 1965.

given period of time) of material of recent copyright date is different when it is held in a separate collection of new materials than it is when it is incorporated into a collection containing much older materials. Furthermore, and equally important, her study suggests that the circulation characteristic of older materials remains the same whether new material is held separately or incorporated into the old material. In short, her study strongly suggests that the most use will be made of library materials, particularly in smaller libraries where one does not expect to get large amounts of "research" use, when the bulk of the collection is new and older materials are discarded.

Of course, in Pennsylvania, one can think of "discarding" materials and sending them on to either the district library center or the regional library resource center. Thus, it is possible in a system to remove a title from one or many local libraries and still have it available for use.

One of the most important underlying assumptions in the Pennsylvania public library plan is that different levels of service may be maintained within a system of libraries. That is to say, the function of the local public library is different from the function of the district library center which in turn is different from the function of the regional library resource center. These differences are commonly expressed as differences in "levels of service" although this term has never been very carefully defined. Certainly, one of the aspects of "levels of service," however, set forth in the basic study done by Lowell Martin(5) relates

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5. Library Service in Pennsylvania, Present and Proposed, Lowell A. Martin. (Harrisburg: The Pennsylvania State Library, 1958, 2 vols.)

to the several collections of the libraries. The present study, involving as it does a number of local libraries and one district library center, attempts to, first, find out what the differences in collection may be, and second, to make some suggestions for further study of this matter and to provide at least some limited basis for that further study through examination of all of the collections. This study is set forth as a preliminary one which has yielded certain suggestions, none of which is in any way to be considered definitive.

It was further assumed that detailed study of the local and district center collections might reveal the nature of policy decisions concerning the collections, or indeed whether or not such decisions had been made. Examination of the data furnished later in this report suggests that the most important discovery is that the decisions are apparently put off indefinitely. It might be more realistic to say that the need to make the decisions had not been recognized. In a real sense, the profession is to blame here for not having furnished the bases for such decisions in the past through the development of realistic, precise standards and the development of various statements of roles for public libraries related to their environments.

PART TWO

METHODOLOGY

The analysis presented in the following sections is based on a date and subject distribution study derived from an extensive sampling of the collection in the Pottsville Free Public Library and District Library Center (during the Summer, 1965) and the collections of the eleven local libraries within the District (during the Summer, 1966). By the "collection" is meant the book holdings of the local library; in the Pottsville Library, periodical volumes were included. The sample was sufficiently large to insure a high degree of statistical accuracy; in fact, in many instances, the "sample" included all the books and periodicals held in certain categories.

Sample Design

Where the shelflist is up to date, contains the pertinent information (copyright or latest publication date), and is arranged to reflect the order of the collection, the sampling method is simple and quick. In the Pottsville Library, which was surveyed first, the shelflist lacked publication dates. Thus, it was necessary to go from shelflist to an examination of books on the shelves. The ideal situation was possible in only four libraries. The method was modified to allow for a direct sampling of the books on the shelves in those libraries without a shelflist or with an unreliable shelflist.

Shelflist sample.—All major components of the book stock were identified (adult fiction, non-fiction; juvenile fiction, non-fiction; reference; special collections). The adult non-fiction was further identified by the traditional Dewey classifications where the shelflist was so arranged. Within each of these classes, or "strata," a number of one-inch groupings of cards were taken, and the copyright date of the book (or first volume in the case of a set) represented by each card in each sample inch was recorded. The larger the stratum, the more one-inch samples taken; for small strata, every card was checked, thus giving a census.

Direct sample.—Where the shelflist could not be used, a systematic sample was taken directly from the books on the shelves, supplemented by a sampling of the circulation file. The book stock, as in the shelflist sample, was divided into strata. The procedure was to select a volume at a pre-selected interval and record the desired information. The larger the stratum, the larger the interval.

Example

	Volumes	Interval	Sample Size
Stratum I	500	every 5th book	100
Stratum II	2,000	every 10th book	200

Recording the data.—The last copyright dates (or latest dates of publication) for the volumes sampled were recorded on a frequency distribution chart

drawn up with mutually exclusive dates at five-year intervals (open end for books copyrighted before 1900). The dates were also recorded on a separate form for each Dewey classification so that date distribution was available by class.

Cautionary note.—The method for collecting data in the Pottsville Library was checked through the use of a systematic sample of the same items. It was discovered that the method originally employed resulted in less than a 5% error for the collection as a whole, but a very much greater error for certain subjects within five-year time periods. It is likely that the original method would produce more and more severe errors if it were applied to larger collections containing a greater variety of topics. Certain topics within a Dewey class (e.g. Civil War) will almost inevitably show a different age distribution than others (e.g. Kennedy Administration). Thus, a systematic sample with a random start should be used in the future.

Devising a Norm

"Norm," according to Webster's Dictionary is, "...an authoritative standard: Model...." As noted earlier, there is no norm for date distribution of a local public library collection which is based in fact on objective, extensive investigation. It has become popular lately to state some limitations on single quantitative standards, but these statements are poorly supported. Thus, we approach the serious question of "so what?" when we set forth data on collections

such as are contained in this study. One way to answer this question, however imprecisely, is to choose an arbitrary norm as a start.

The Standard Catalog for Public Libraries[6] is used extensively as a standard book selection aid for adult non-fiction. In that Catalog, certain items are "starred" and "double-starred" as being recommended for first purchase by a public library. It is not the aim of this study either to publicize or assign undue weight to that Catalog. The investigators chose that aid for comparative purposes. Obviously, it would be highly desirable to use several aids. Preferably those other aids would have been compiled more recently than the basic volume of the Standard Catalog.... However, the limits of time and money prescribed seeking some ready and reasonably defensible device. So the Standard Catalog for Public Libraries was chosen.

A census was taken of all starred and double-starred items in the Catalog. The resulting curve is presented as Graph 14 (see pocket insert, back cover of this report). This curve has a general character which could have been predicted. It is that of a curve of obsolescence. One might expect to find such a curve if one were studying the sales of parts for used cars, the sales of back issues of periodicals, or almost any other phenomenon which is related to human behavior.

The curve presented here indicates that the most recent books are the most frequently cited and that frequency of citation declines in a fairly regular fashion with age, but seldom drops to zero.

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6. Standard Catalog for Public Libraries, Fourth Edition and Supplements, (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1958-1966).

This curve indicates that fashions and interests change with time and that knowledge increases in accuracy and quantity with time. One may assume from the curve that librarians are influenced in their selection of titles by their own and the publishers' awareness of these changes.

The curve of the Standard Catalog for Public Libraries would no doubt move to the left on our graph if the basic volume were to be compiled again today. It suggests, however, as it stands, that 75% of the adult non-fiction titles in a public library collection should be less than 15 years old. Now, we quite dogmatically have taken that as the lowest reasonable figure, and now propose that, in fact, 75%-90% of material less than 10 years old is a good rule of thumb for the small library operating in a state-wide system such as Pennsylvania's.

This rule of thumb must, of course, be used with judgment. In literature, for example, 75% is more reasonable than 90%; in science and technology, 90% may be too conservative. The size of the collection should also be considered: the smaller the library, the higher the percentage guideline, in general. The extent to which a library has built up back files of periodicals and indexes, certain year books, local history and other special collections of particular value to an individual community is another factor to be considered. Certainly, a library should not feel penalized for having developed such collections. The 75% end of the range allows for the inclusion of these items. However, if one wanted to exclude such collections in applying the formula, then the range should be moved up to 85%-95%.

The same type of census was taken of the Children's Catalog.[7] A little over two-thirds of the starred titles in this Catalog (67.6%) carry copyright dates falling within the last fifteen years; almost half the items (45.1%) were copyrighted within the past ten years. The resulting curve is presented as Graph 16 (see pocket insert, back cover).

Because so many titles in a good children's collection are "classics," the copyright date for such a title may not be indicative of its worth. Even here, however, recent copyright date may have some relevance, since new editions, especially illustrated editions, will carry recent copyright dates. This factor is born out by the age distribution curve of the Children's Catalog.

The starred items in the Fiction Catalog[8] did not produce the expected curve of obsolescence. The curve represents an "ideal" collection in which literature of all time periods are more or less equally represented. For this reason, a systematic sample (every 25th item) was taken of all titles in the Fiction Catalog. The curve produced by the sampling method follows very closely the curves representing starred titles in the two other selection tools used. The resulting curve is presented as Graph 15 (see pocket insert, back cover). This guideline probably is more suitable for the District Library Center than for smaller libraries operating within the system. Once a fiction title is no longer in active use in the small library, it should be considered for discard regardless of publication date.

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7. Children's Catalog, edited by R. Shor and E. Fidell. (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 11th edition, 1966, 1015 pp.)

8. Fiction Catalog, Seventh Edition and Supplements, edited by E. Fidell and E. Flory. (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1960-1966.)

Obviously, much more work must be done before reliable or even easily supportable norms or standards may be set. Further stratification (e.g., science books for children) should be carried out combining statistical methods with the judgments of experienced specialists.(9)

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9. A good starting point is offered in "Weeding the Small Library Collection," Supplement A to Small Libraries Project Pamphlet No. 5. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1962.)

PART THREE

AGE OF THE COLLECTIONS

The local libraries studied in this report are cited by alphabetical code rather than by name. The age distribution of the collections is presented visually by means of bar charts and line graphs. The bar charts appear on pages 21 to 34; line graphs on pages 37 to 48.

Bar Charts

The bar charts readily reveal the facts for each main part of the collection: adult non-fiction, adult fiction and juvenile. Two additional charts are included for the Pottsville District Library Center: one chart showing the date distribution of the whole collection, and a second showing the age distribution of the reference collection. With the exception of the District Center, the libraries in question do not have reference collections of any size or scope.

As a guide to the librarians and trustees examining the data for their own particular library, it should be noted that the more current volumes there are in the collection, the higher the bars at the left of the chart will be. Thus, if a library purchases at a constant, or accelerated, rate each year and also weeds out older, superceded materials at a steady rate, the bars will taper off, declining

sharply in size on the right-hand side of the chart. Charts 12 and 17 are examples of collections that have been developed and maintained at reasonably good levels.

Chart 1 shows the percentage of titles by copyright date in the whole collection of the Pottsville Free Public Library. One would have expected a higher percentage of recent titles (e.g., higher bars at the left of the chart). The gradual, rather than sharp, decline of the bars toward the right-hand side of the chart indicates that the collection has not been weeded of older materials to any extent. The picture presented in Chart 1 is somewhat misleading. The significant facts about the age distribution of the collection become clear only as we examine the charts for the several parts of the collection, represented in Charts 2, 3, 4 and 5. These charts reveal that adult fiction and juvenile acquisitions have pushed up the percentage of current materials for the collection as a whole. So the analysis of a collection by age distribution becomes meaningful only as we identify the main parts of the collection.

The following analysis draws together the facts presented in the bar charts, with some supplemental discussion, providing a composite picture for the Pottsville Library District as a whole.

Adult Non-Fiction

Half of the libraries have collections containing more books copyrighted before 1900 than books copyrighted within the last five years. (In one library, 30% of the collection consists of books copyrighted before 1900; less than 1% since 1960.)

The majority of libraries have more books copyrighted 1925 or earlier (e.g., more than 40 years ago) than books copyrighted since 1956.

Only two libraries come close to having collections that may be said to contain a majority of "currently useful" adult non-fiction materials. (Library C has a collection with 46.1% of its books published within the past 5 years; 60.5% within the last 10 years. A thorough weeding of this collection was done at the time the Library moved into new quarters. At that time a selection of books was purchased under a Title 1 LSCA grant. Library D has a collection with 47.7% of its books published within the last 5 years; 59.8% within the last 10 years. This library has only been in operation for a few years and up to last year occupied quarters so small that they precluded accepting a number of attic discards and also necessitated weeding.)

The District Library Center.—Because of the role of the District Library Center in supplementing the resources of local libraries, and in light of the picture presented thus far, a special look at the Pottsville Library's adult non-fiction collection is warranted.

Chart 3 shows that 59.3% of the non-fiction books were copyrighted in 1940 or before. In other words, more than half of this collection is over 25 years old. Going another step, 32.7% of the books were copyrighted 1925 or earlier; almost a third of the collection is more than 40 years old. Books published before 1950 (fifteen years prior to the year in which the data were collected) account for four-fifths of the total adult non-fiction collection.

A date distribution analysis has been made of one other District Library

Center collection--the New Castle Free Public Library.[10] A direct comparison of the date distribution of the reference collections of the two libraries can be made. While the New Castle Library cannot be considered a model--indeed, that collection was described as "far too old"--it nonetheless does provide a point of comparison for a library with a similar district role.

TABLE 1

Percentage of Reference Collection by Date Distribution
Comparison of New Castle and Pottsville Collections

	Copyright Date		
	Since 1960	1950 or earlier	1940 or earlier
Pottsville	9.1%	78.4%	65.9%
New Castle	33.0%	42.8%	30.5%

A library's reference collection, if it is made up of long runs of a large number of periodicals, indexes, etc., would reflect strength in a high percentage of older works. However, both libraries are deficient in number of periodical titles held and back files of these materials; the Pottsville collection is slightly weaker in this respect. Thus, the older date distribution pattern for the Pottsville reference collection is not a reflection of strength.

The most significant point of comparison in the two reference collections is the percentage of titles copyrighted within the most recent five-year interval.

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10. New Castle Free Public Library, Present and Future: A Planning Study, Ralph Blasingame. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: mimeographed, 1965, 81 pp.)

The dramatic impact of state aid on the New Castle Library's reference collection was noted in that investigation. Because the Pottsville Library serves a small district (about half the size of the New Castle district), the amounts of state aid received up to 1965 were not great enough to exert any radical influence on the overall date distribution pattern, despite a considerable increase in the rate of acquisition of materials over previous levels.

In any event, at the time the data were collected for this study, the Pottsville District Library Center was not in a position to supplement the weak holdings within the District, by way of current, up-to-date information.

Adult Fiction

In half the libraries, books published since 1960 make up less than 10% of the total fiction holdings. Only two libraries show a peak within the last five-year interval.

Four libraries hold more fiction titles published before 1925 than fiction of the last ten years.

Although one might expect the District Center collection, because of its size, to be older than the collections of local libraries, such was not the case, generally.

Overall, the fiction collections of the local libraries are less dated than the non-fiction collections, but they are nonetheless much older than one would expect.

Juvenile Collections

Over 30% of the children's collections in four libraries consists of books copyrighted since 1960.

Over half of the items in the collections of four libraries (not all the same libraries) were copyrighted since 1956.

For the reverse side of the picture, the bulk of the juvenile collections in four other libraries consists of titles copyrighted 1945 or earlier.

Seven libraries, including Pottsville, hold a surprisingly high percentage (from 7.2% to 30.4%) of books copyrighted 1925 or earlier.

Some of the problems suggested by the date distribution patterns of these juvenile collections can be illustrated by a discussion of the Pottsville Library's collection.

The District Library Center.—Books published before 1950 account for half the total juvenile collection. Slightly over one-third of the collection (35.2%) consists of items copyrighted prior to 1940, or more than 25 years ago.

It has already been noted that many titles in a good children's collection are "classics," and that copyright date for such a title cannot be considered an indication of its worth. In view of this fact, and the rough and tumble use of children's books, one would expect a high portion of the juvenile book budget to be spent on replacement items. The worn, tattered appearance of books on the shelves confirms the evidence presented here; namely, that replacements have not been made with any recency or frequency. The Children's Department has been operating with a limited book budget for many years. Until the advent

of state aid, annual expenditures for children's book purchases ranged from $600 to $1,500; and some of that was diverted to school book stations. Obviously such a budget could provide at best for little more than the most important current books. The result now is that virtually the entire juvenile collection needs to be replaced.

Children in the Pottsville Library District would seem to fare better than their parents in finding recent materials in the library's collection. At the same time, the percentage of the whole collection consisting of recent children's books, as indicated by the bar charts, is small.

CHART 1

POTTSVILLE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY
DATE DISTRIBUTION OF WHOLE COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 78,549

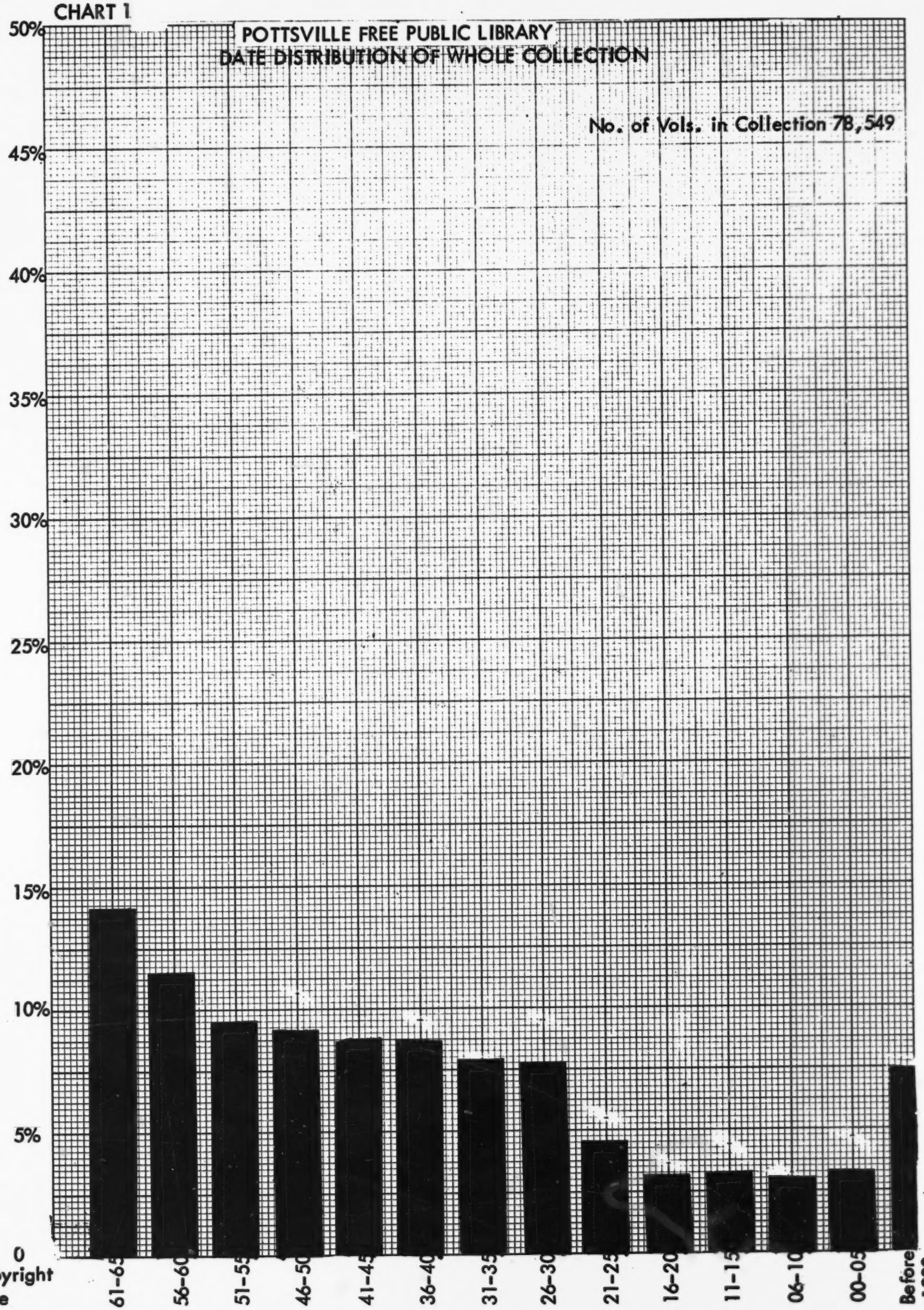


CHART 2

POTTSVILLE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT REFERENCE COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 6,391

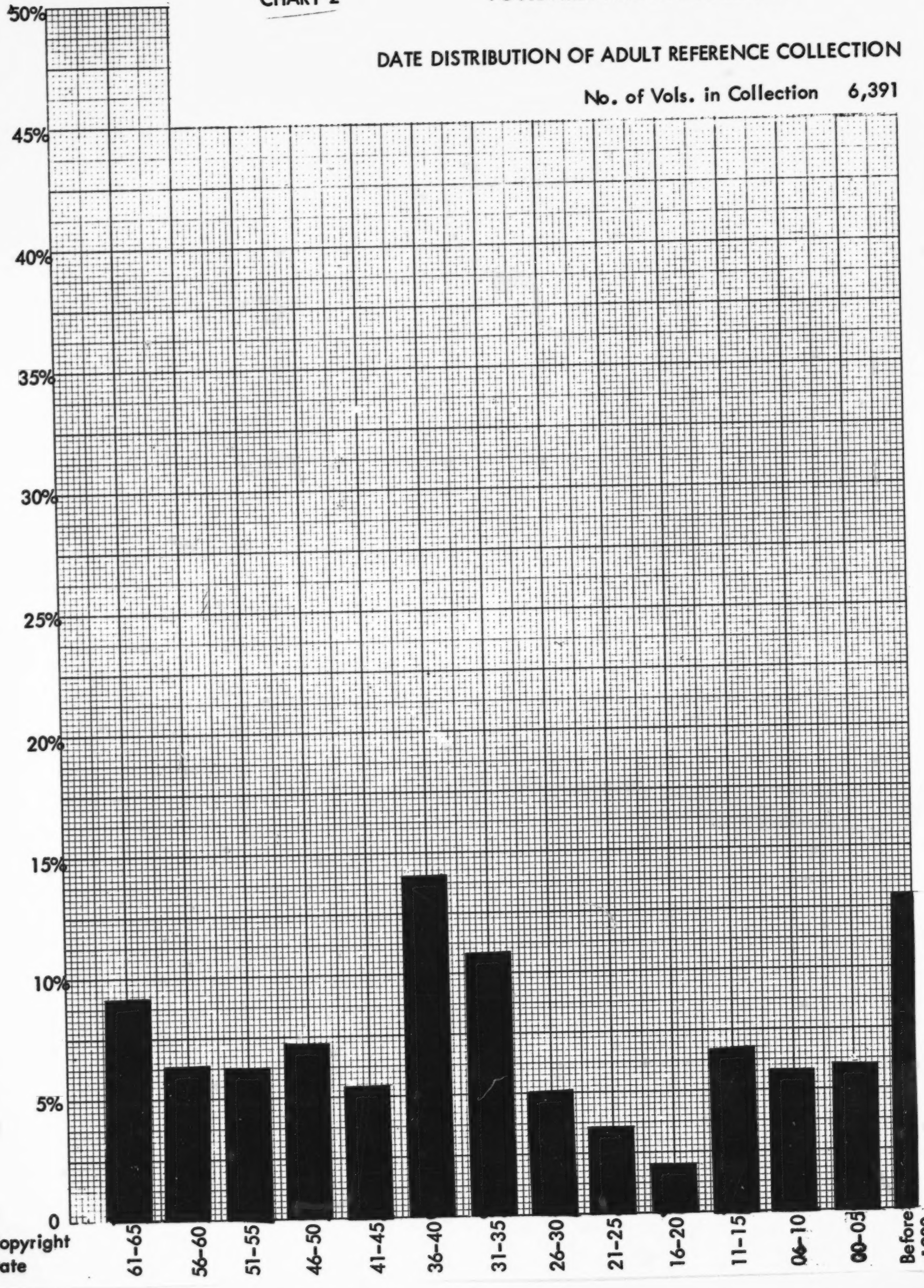


CHART 3

POTTSVILLE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT NON-FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 39,607

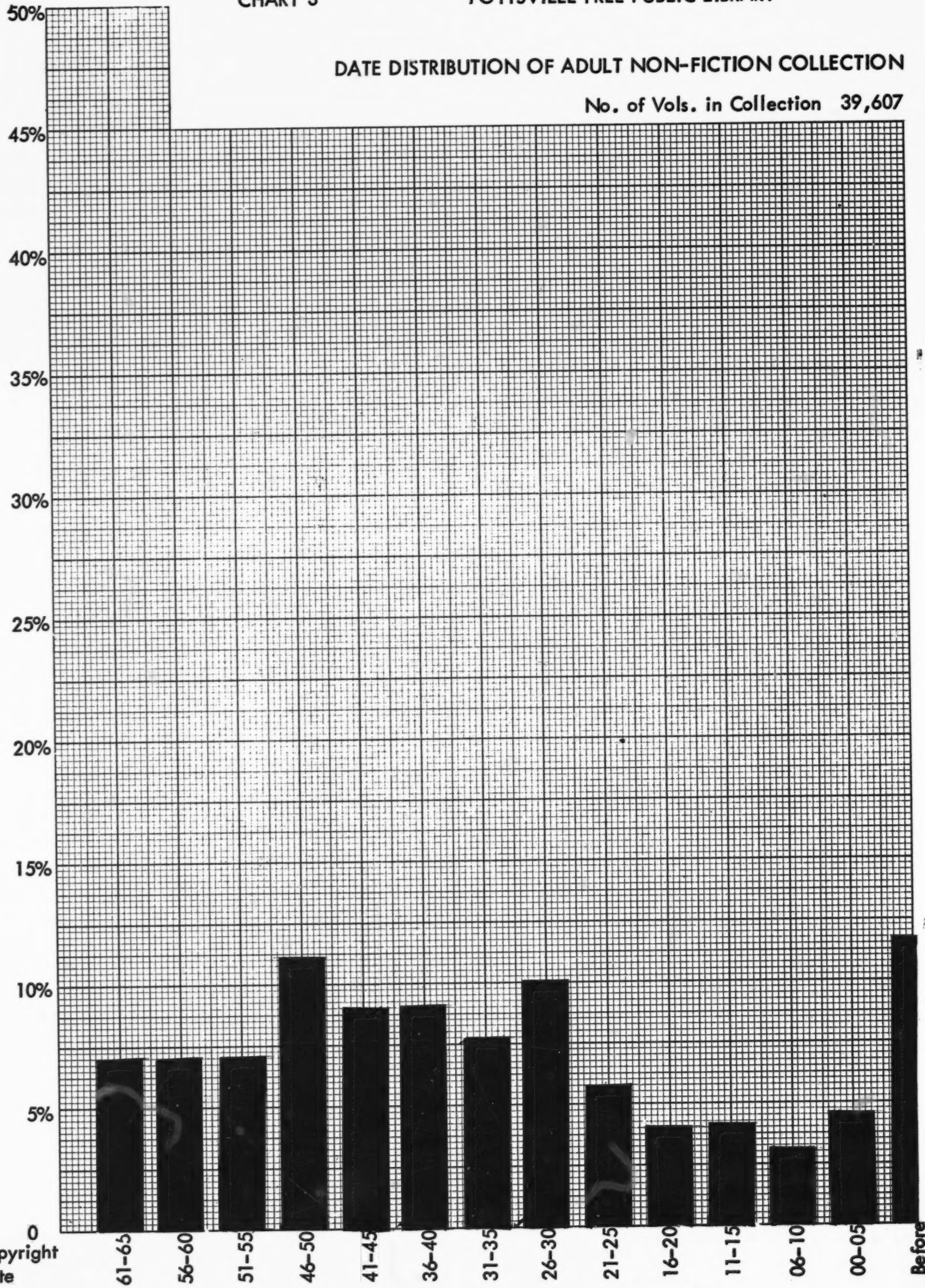


CHART 4

POTTSVILLE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 13,011

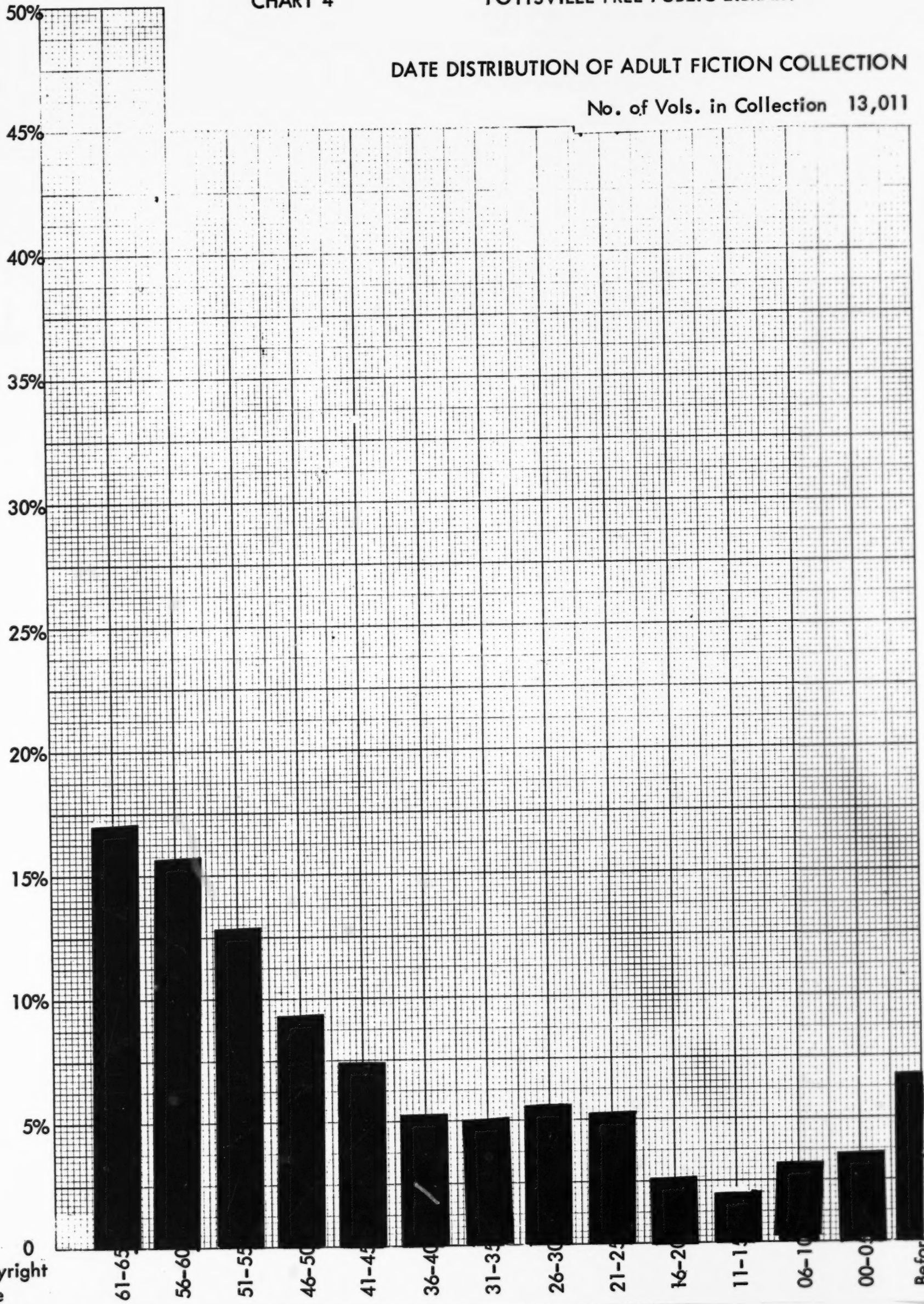


CHART 5

POTTSVILLE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILE COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 19,540

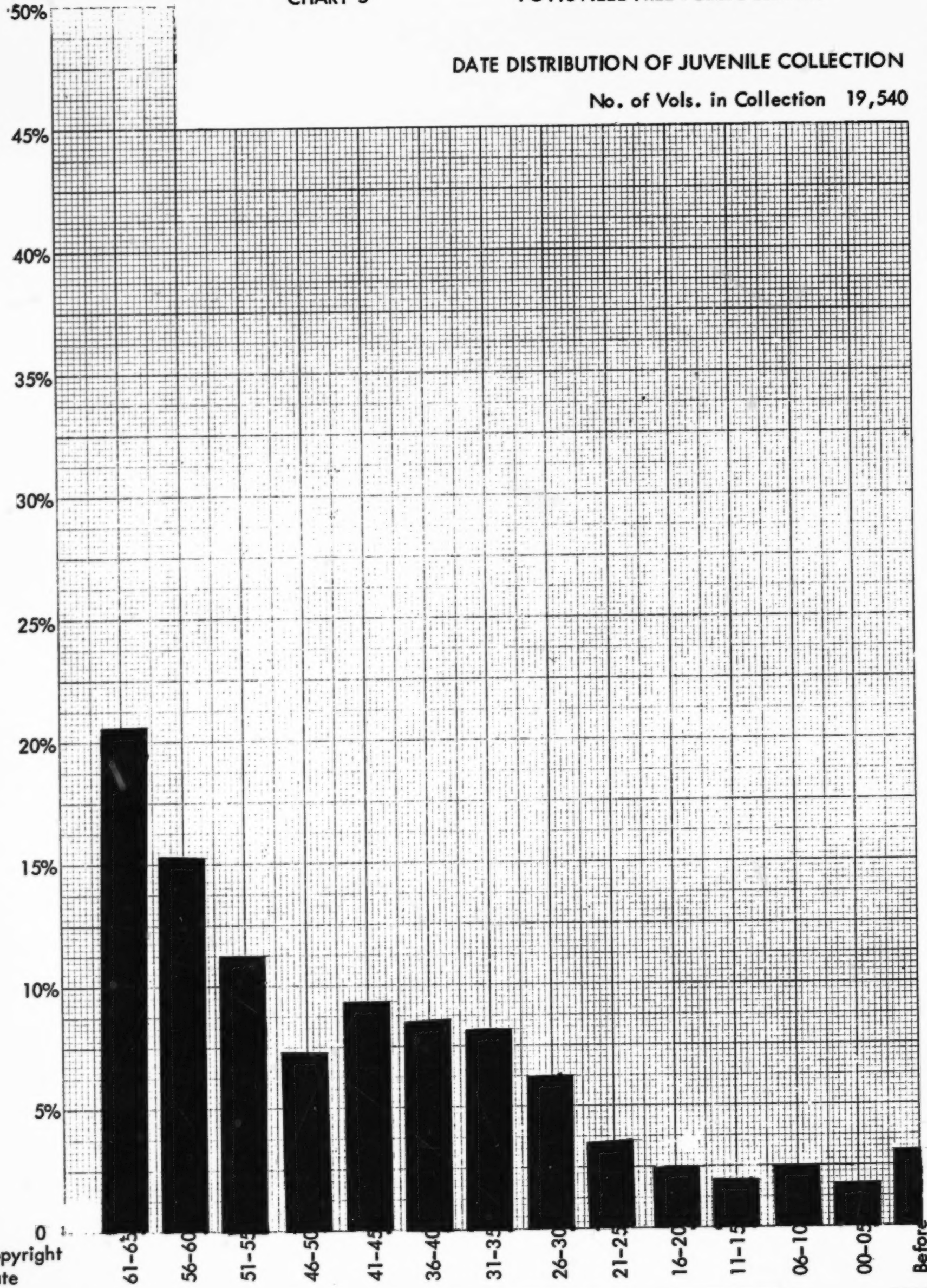


CHART 6

LIBRARY A

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT NON-FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 2,616

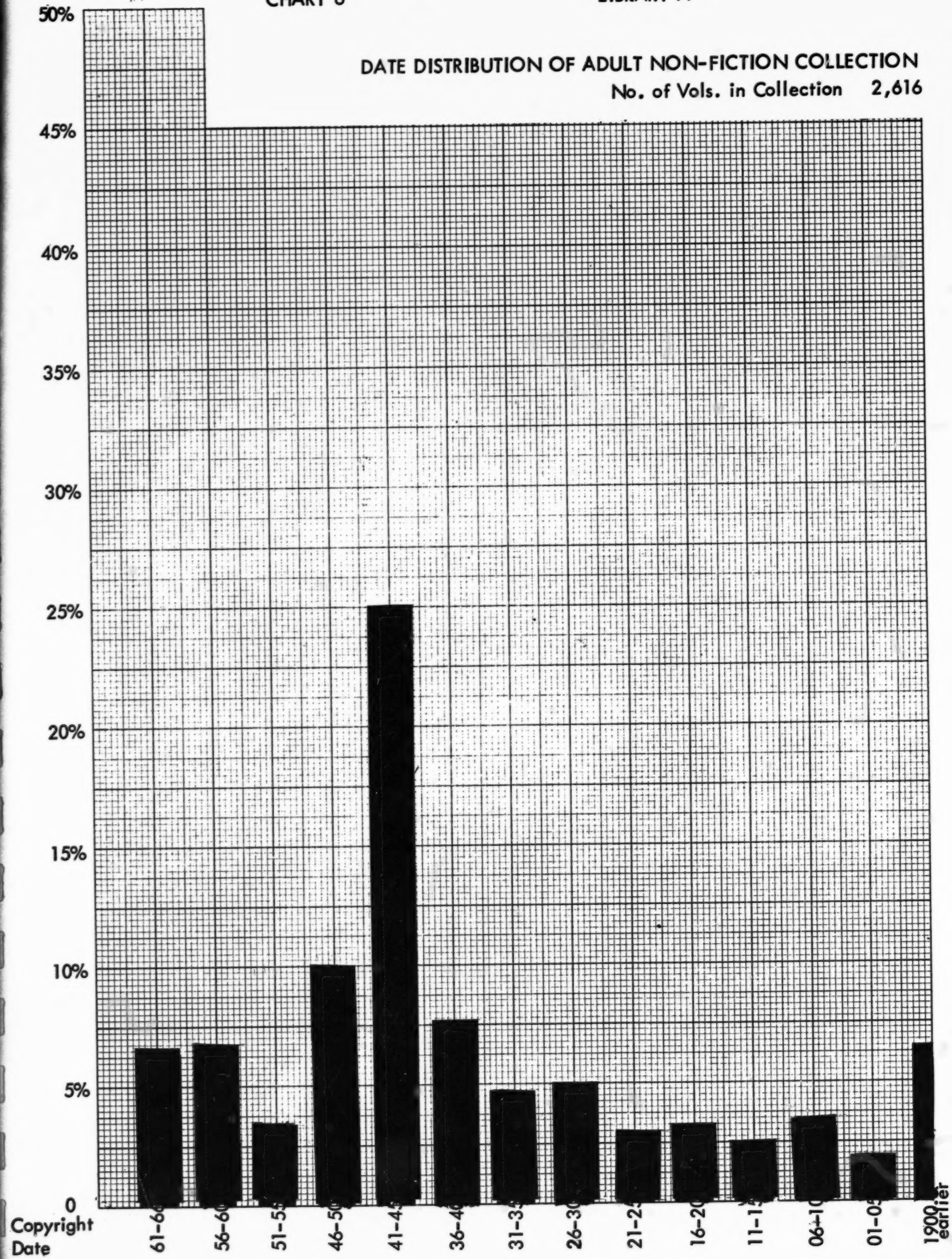


CHART 7

LIBRARY A

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 3,312

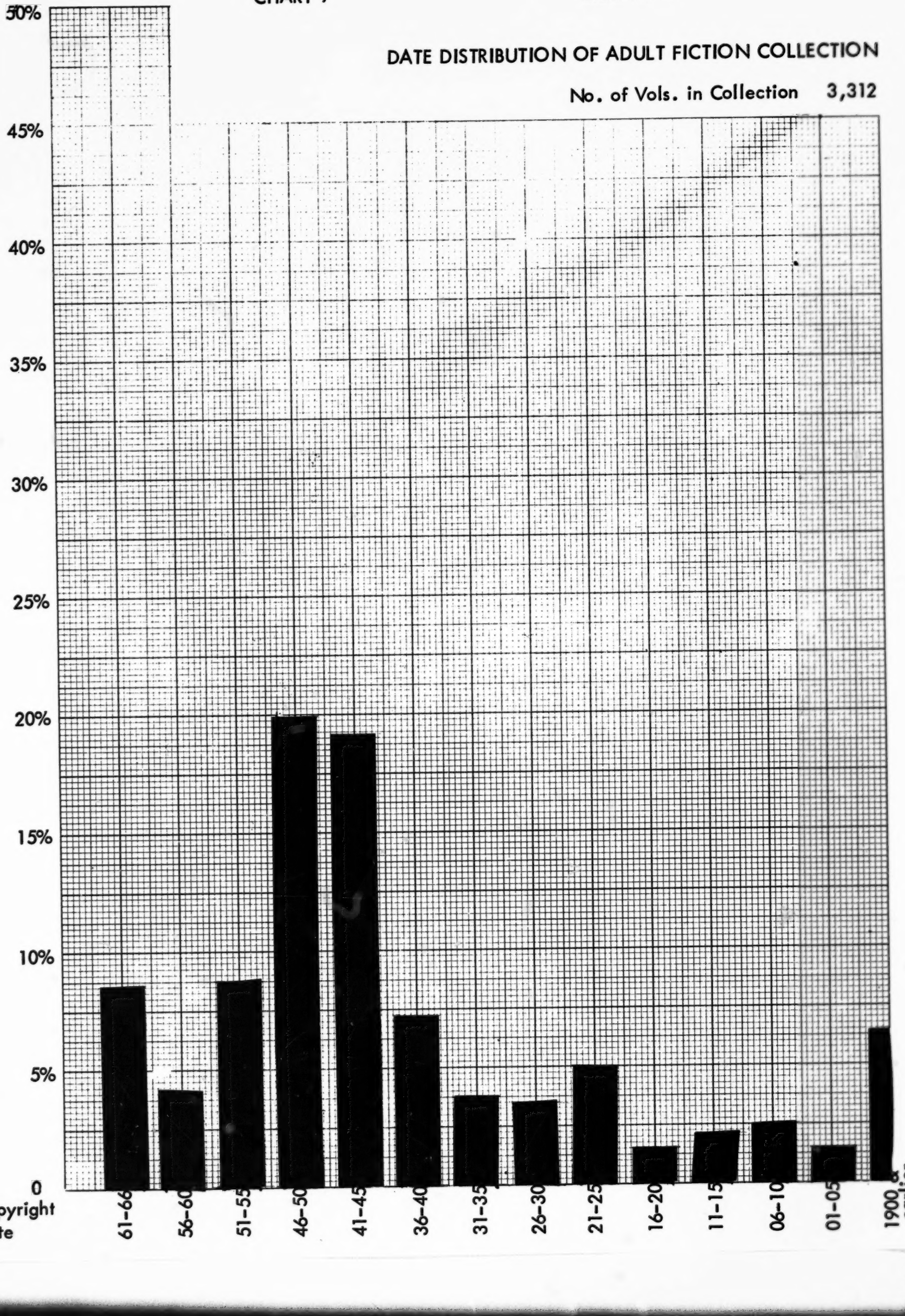


CHART 8

LIBRARY A

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILE COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 1,640

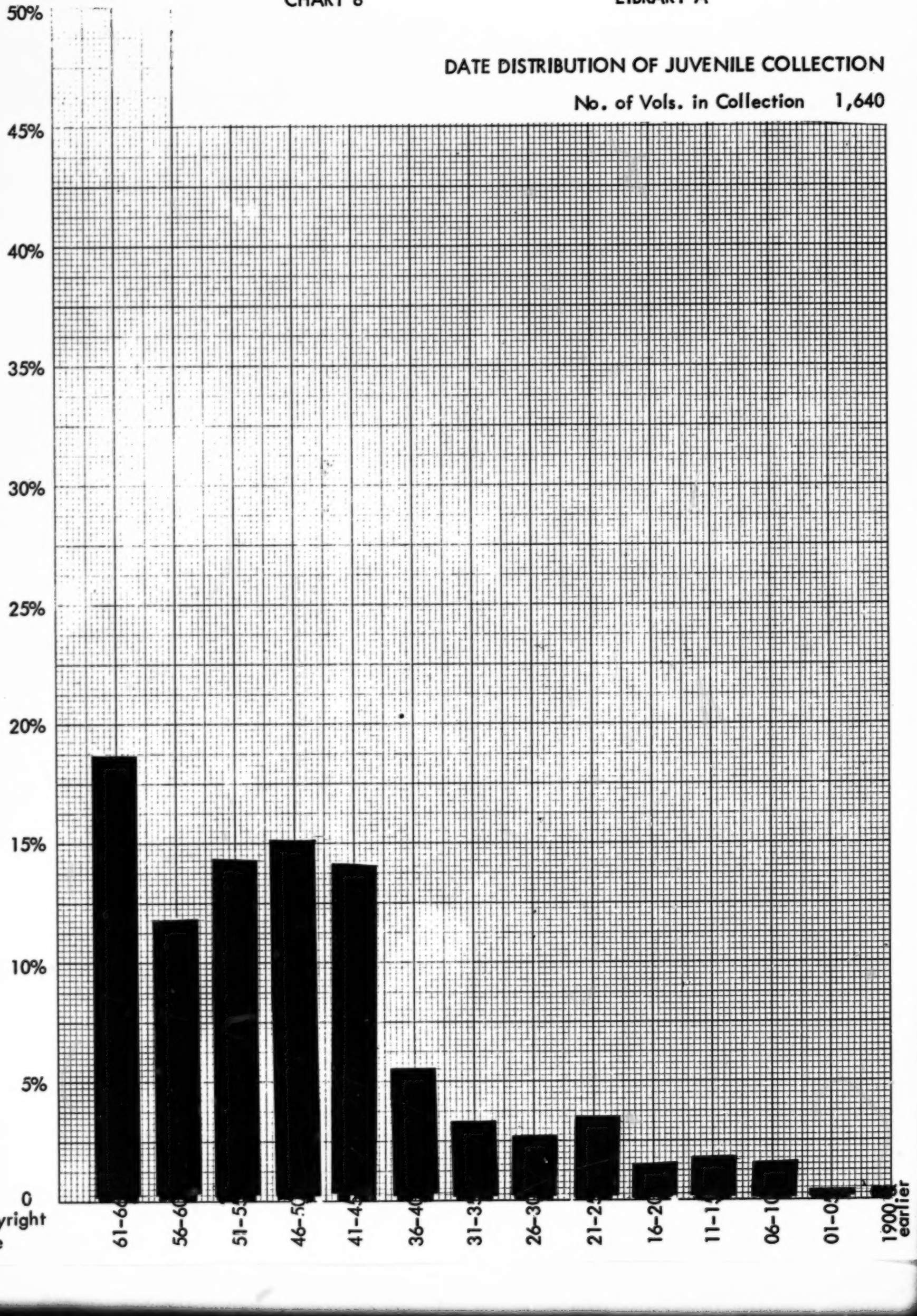


CHART 9

LIBRARY B

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT NON-FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 3,126

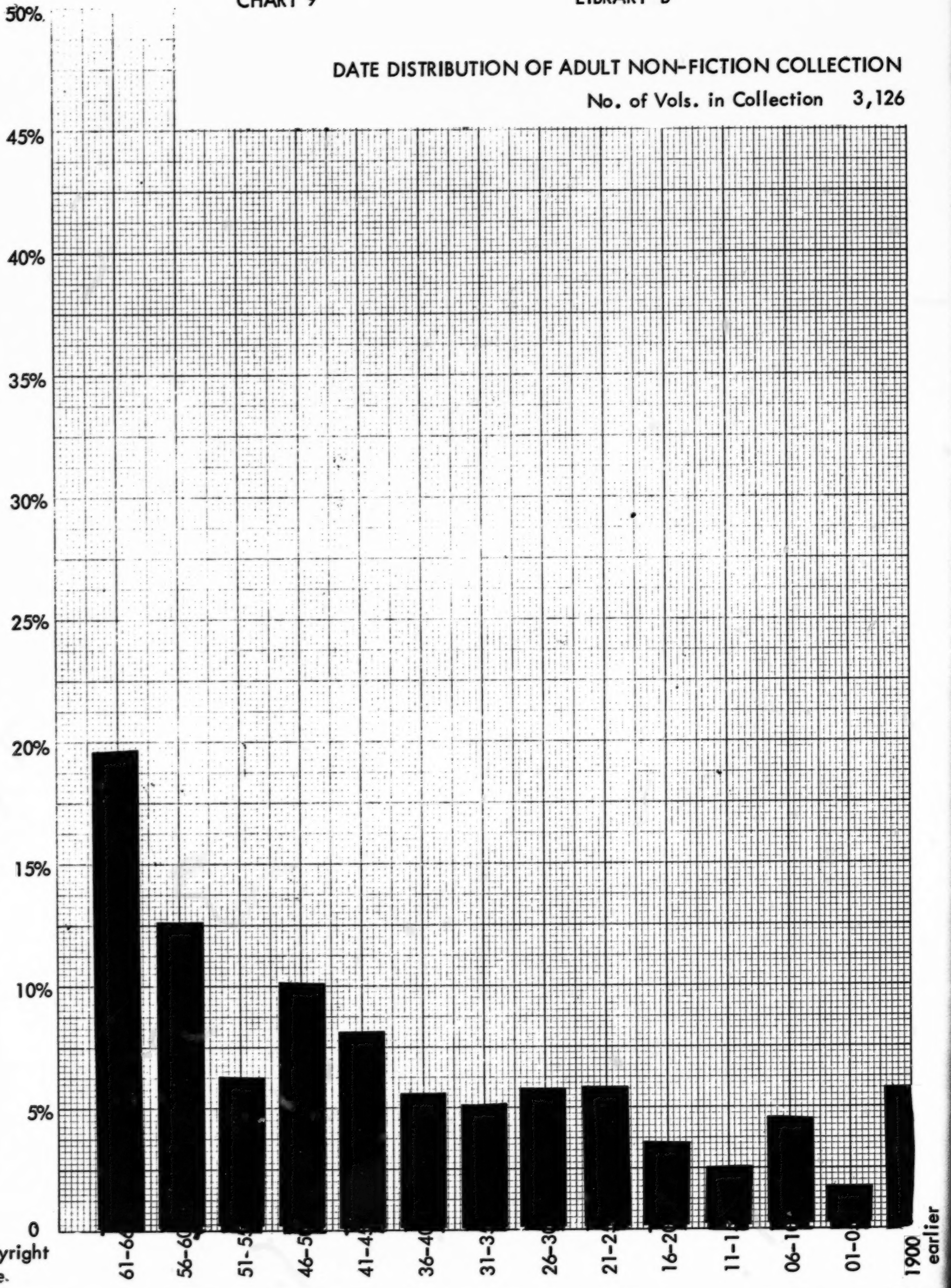


CHART 10

LIBRARY B

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 4,883

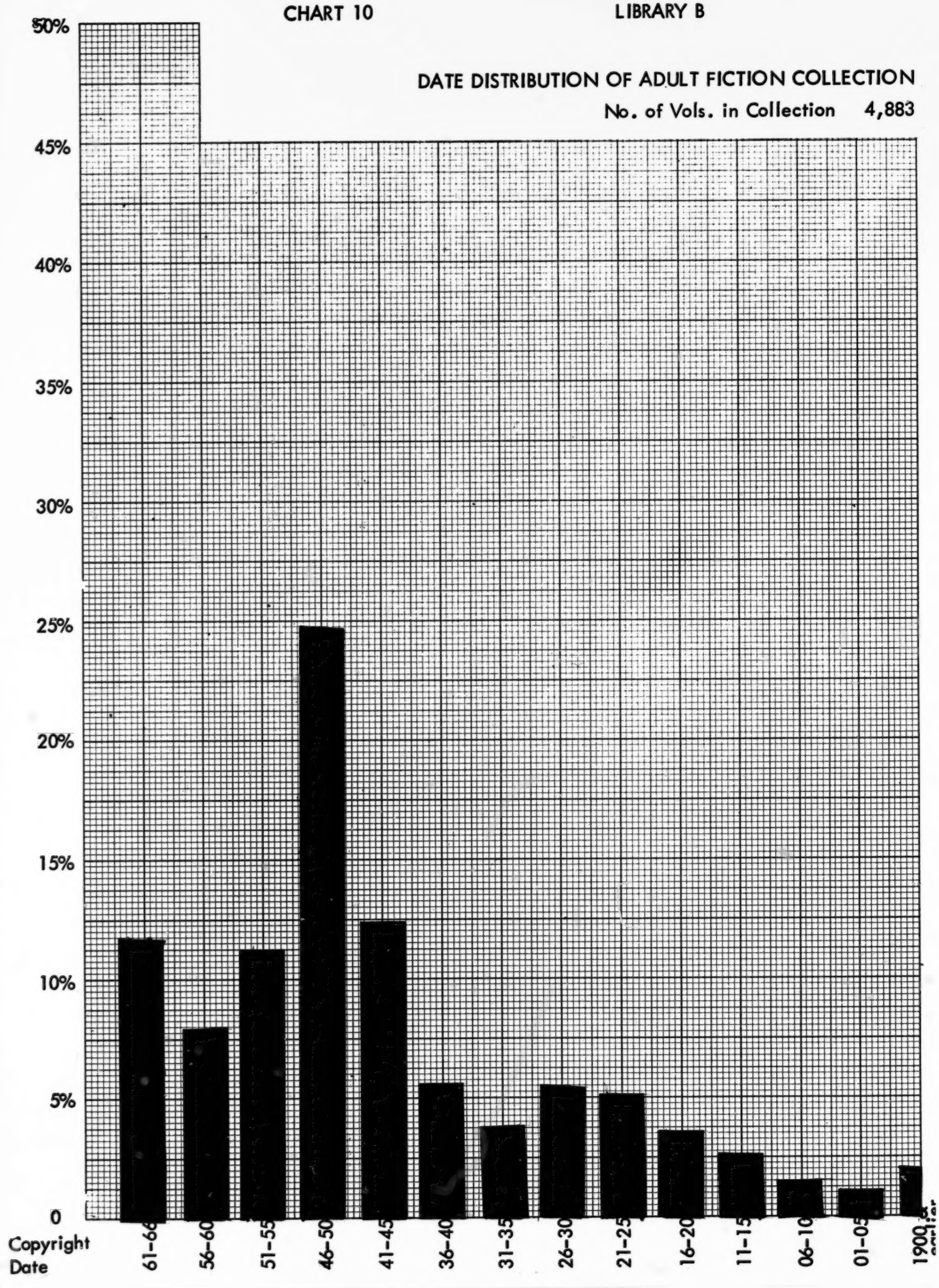


CHART 11

LIBRARY B

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILE COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 1,250

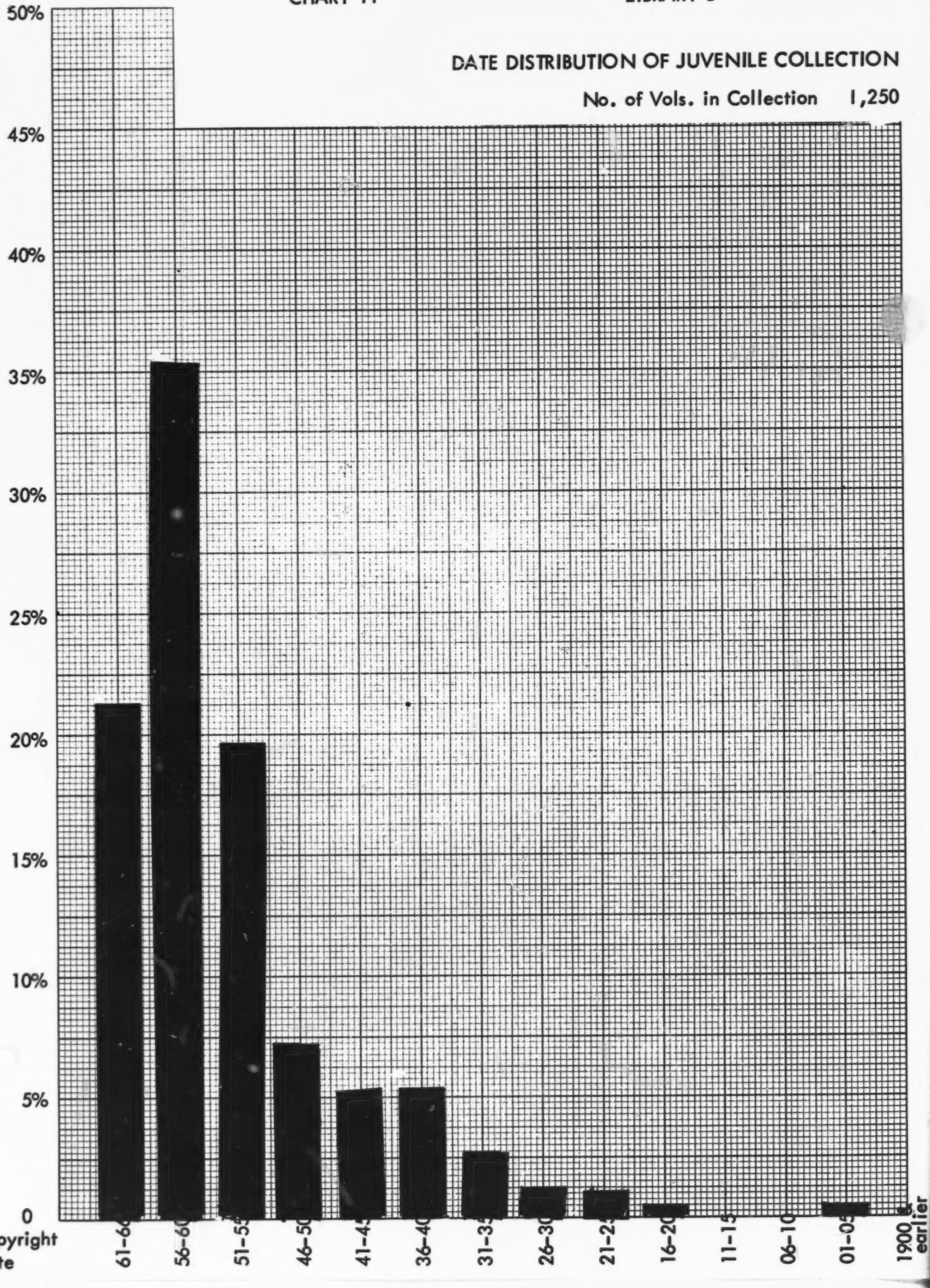


CHART 12

LIBRARY C

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT NON-FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 1,040

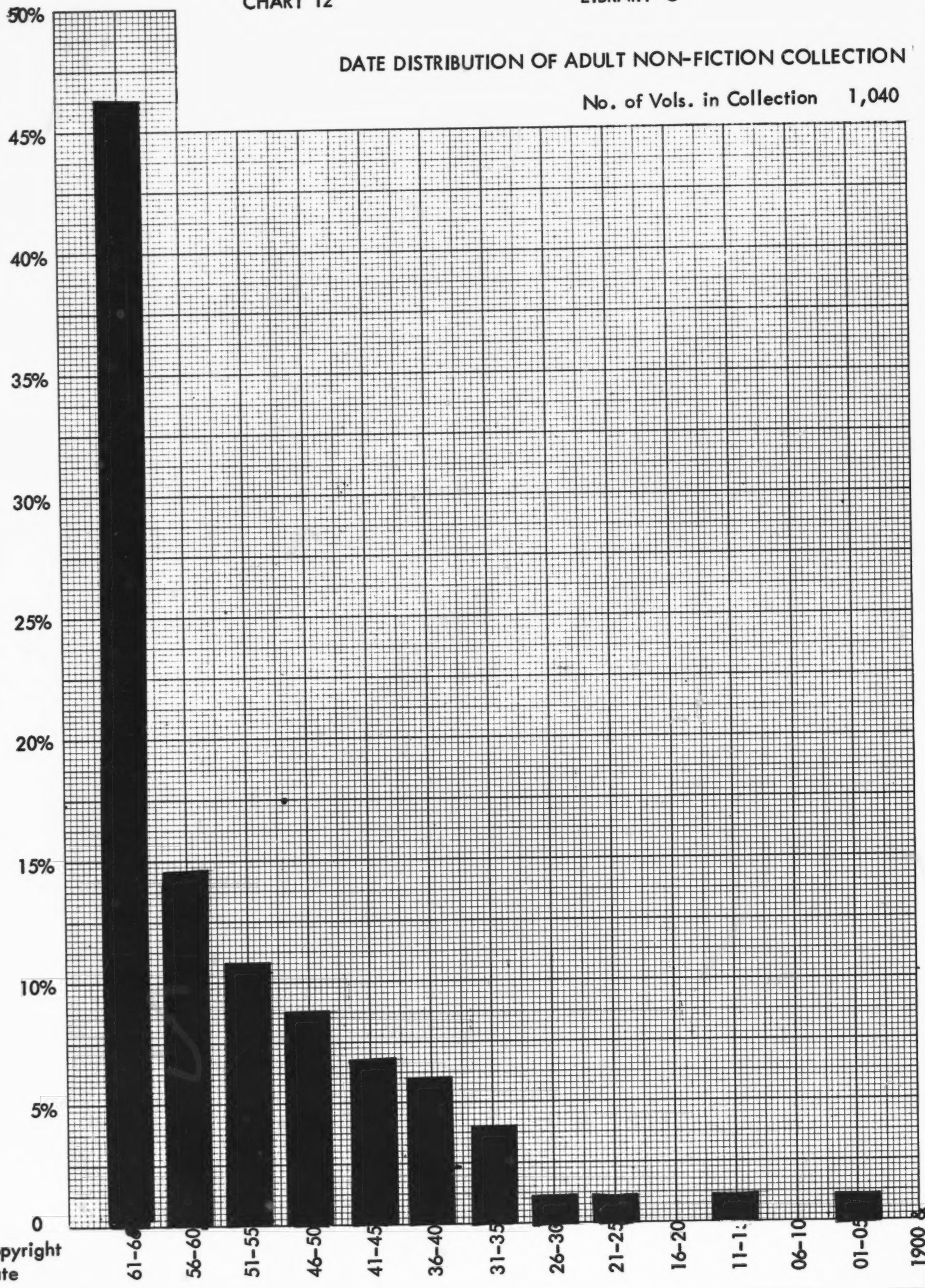


CHART 13

LIBRARY C

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 2,490

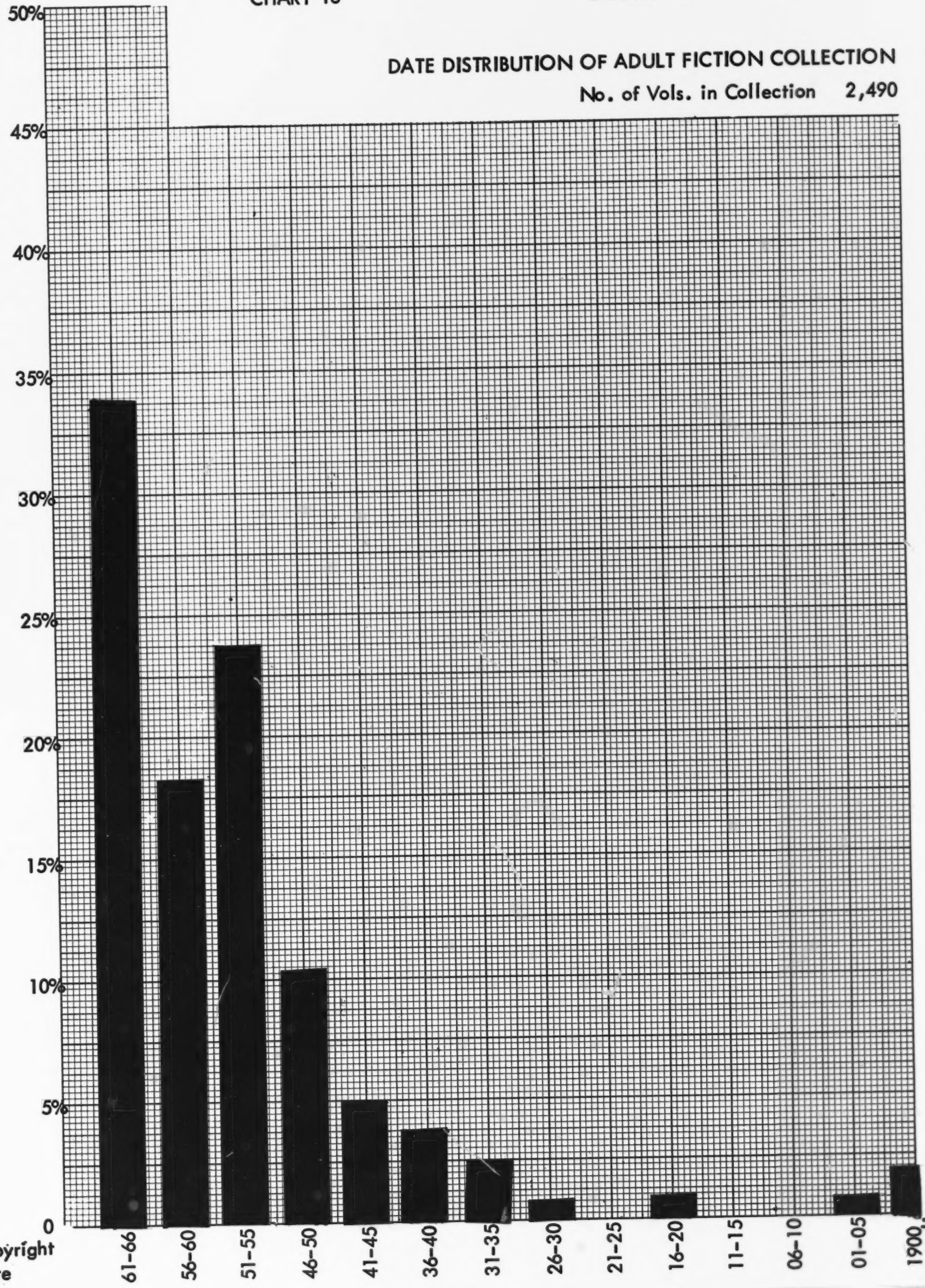


CHART 14

LIBRARY C

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILE COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 2,030

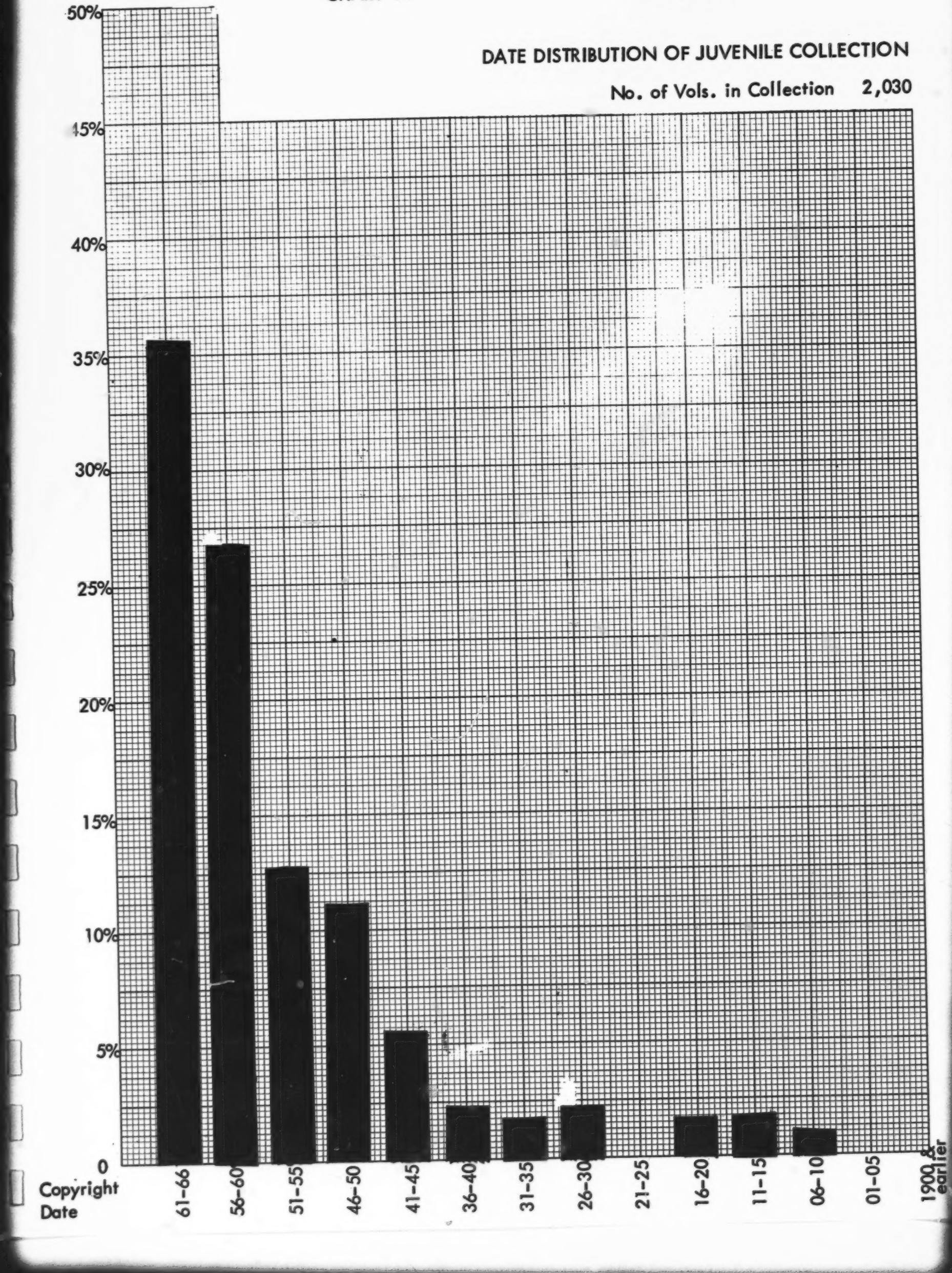


CHART 15

LIBRARY D

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT NON-FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 1,331

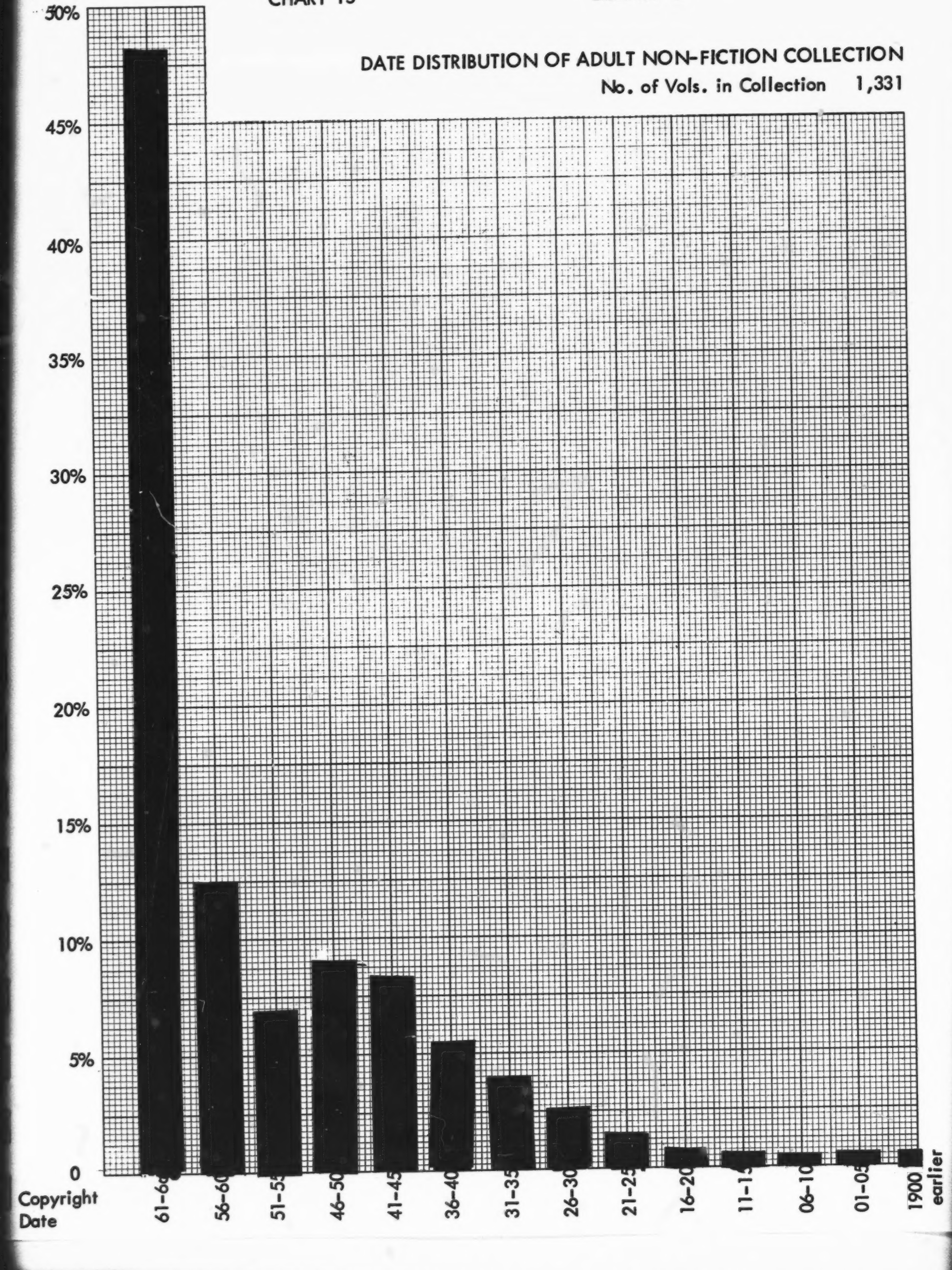


CHART 16

LIBRARY D

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 1,880

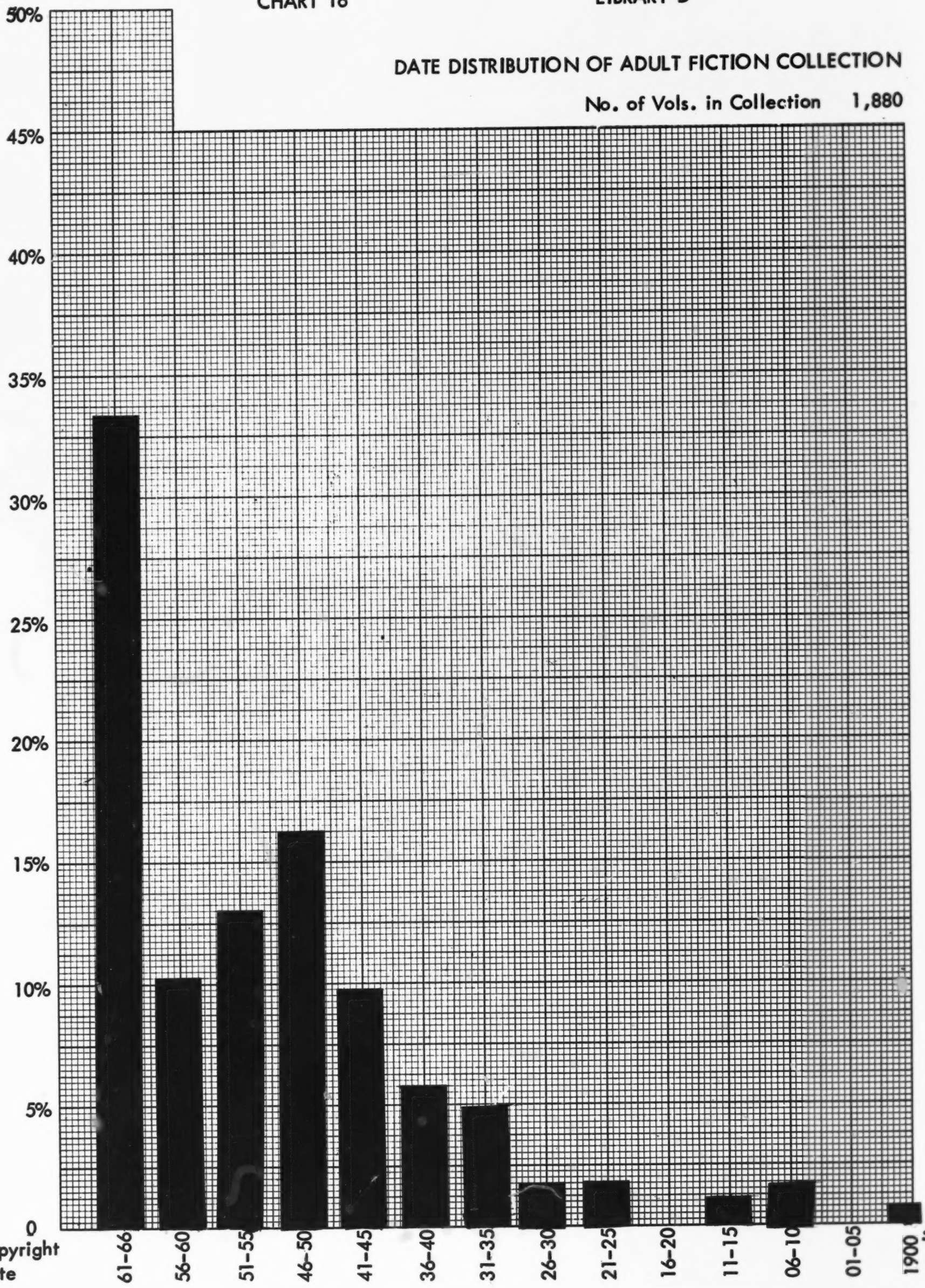


CHART 17

LIBRARY D

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILE COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 2,194

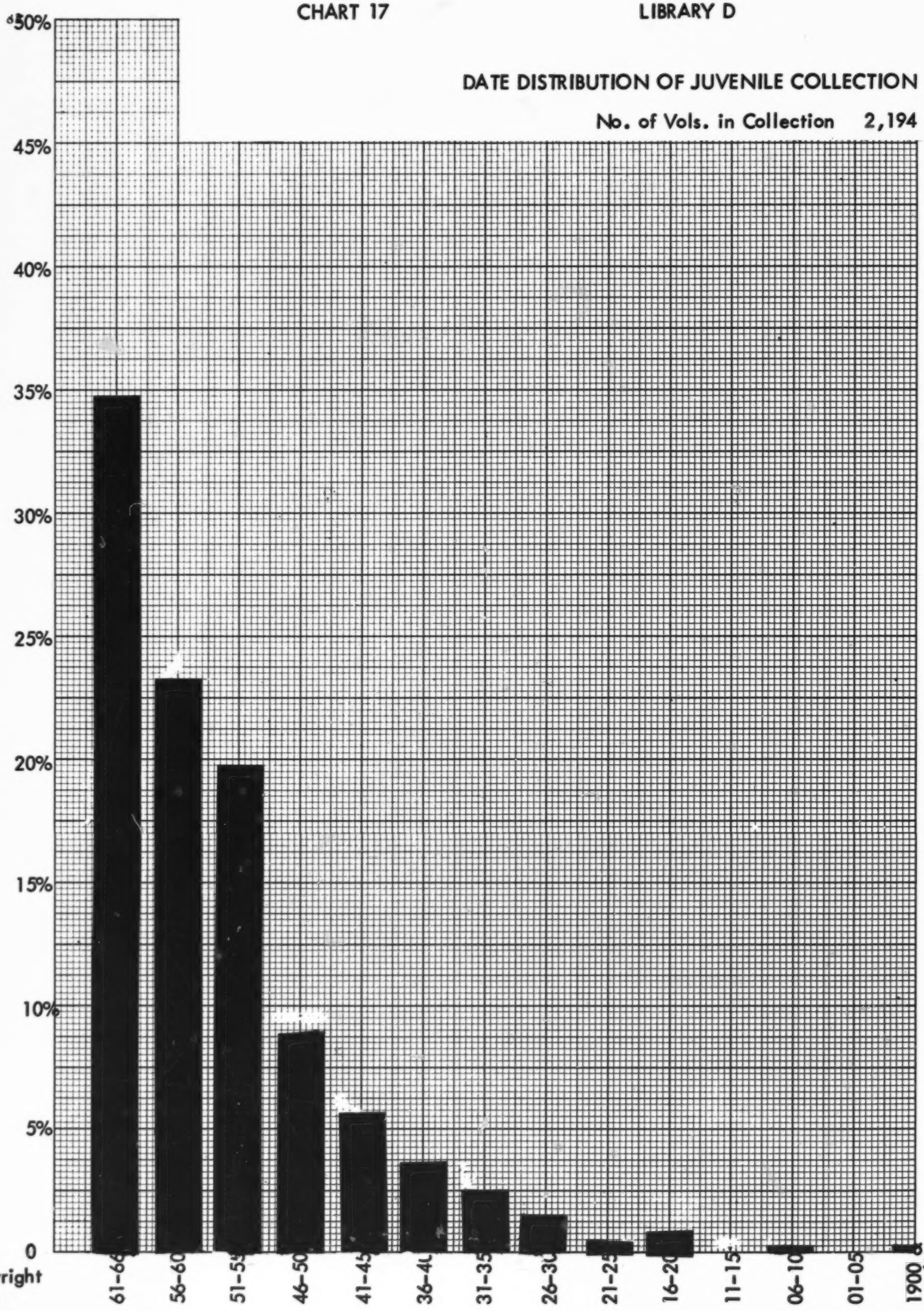


CHART 18

LIBRARY E

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT NON-FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 5,576

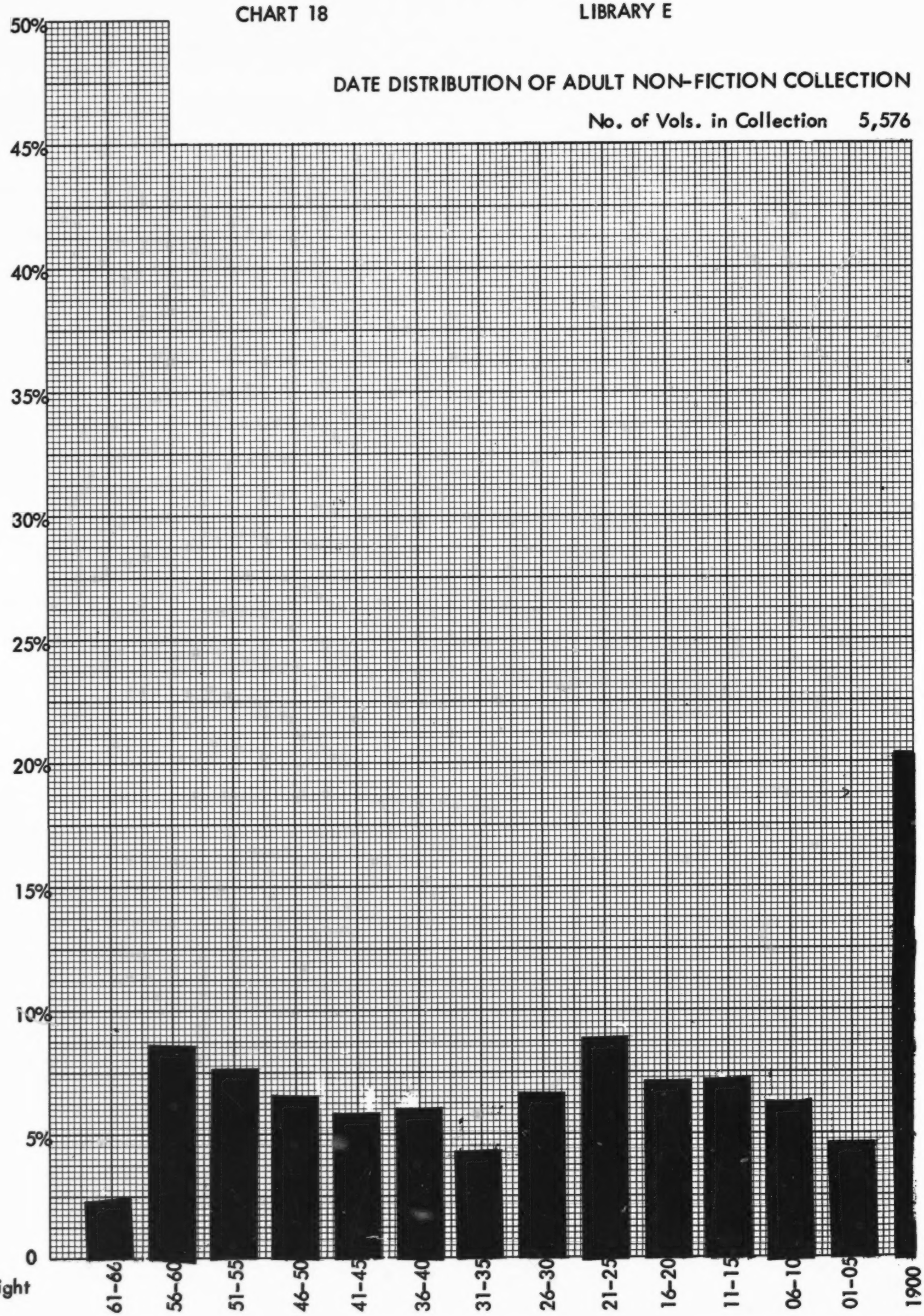


CHART 19

LIBRARY E

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 2,600

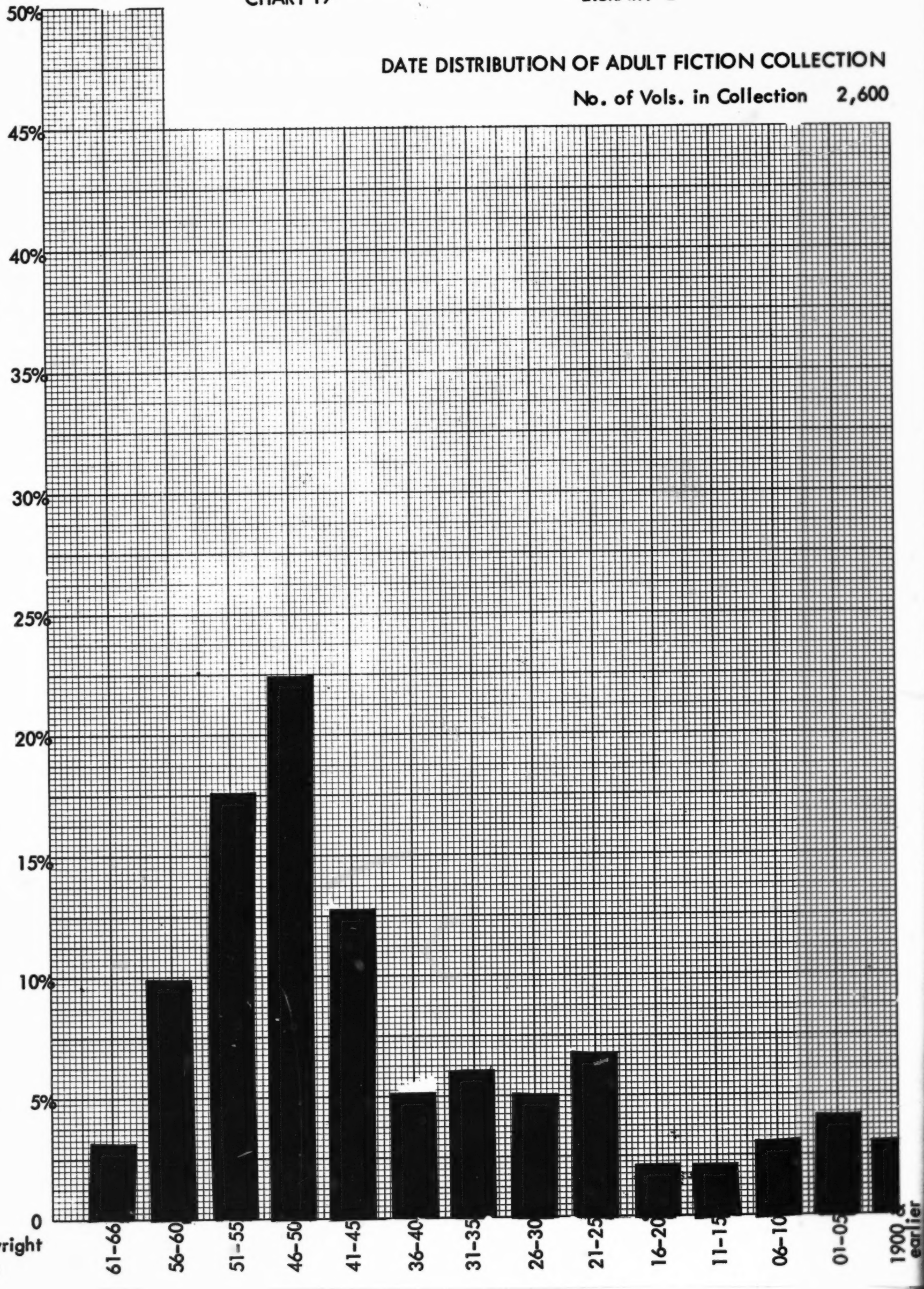


CHART 20

LIBRARY F

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT NON-FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 549

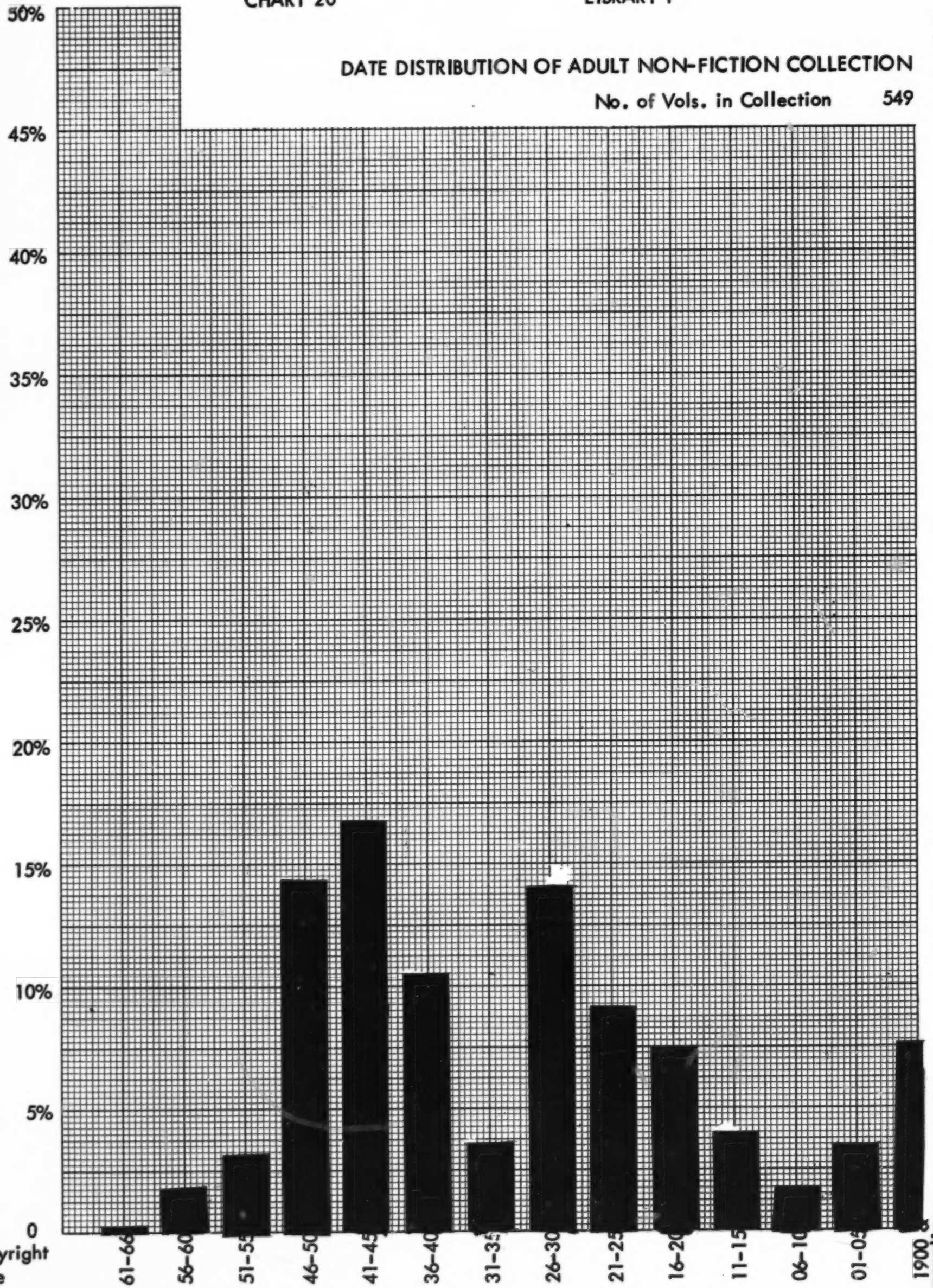


CHART 21

LIBRARY F

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT FICTION COLLECTION

No of Vols. in Collection 1,575

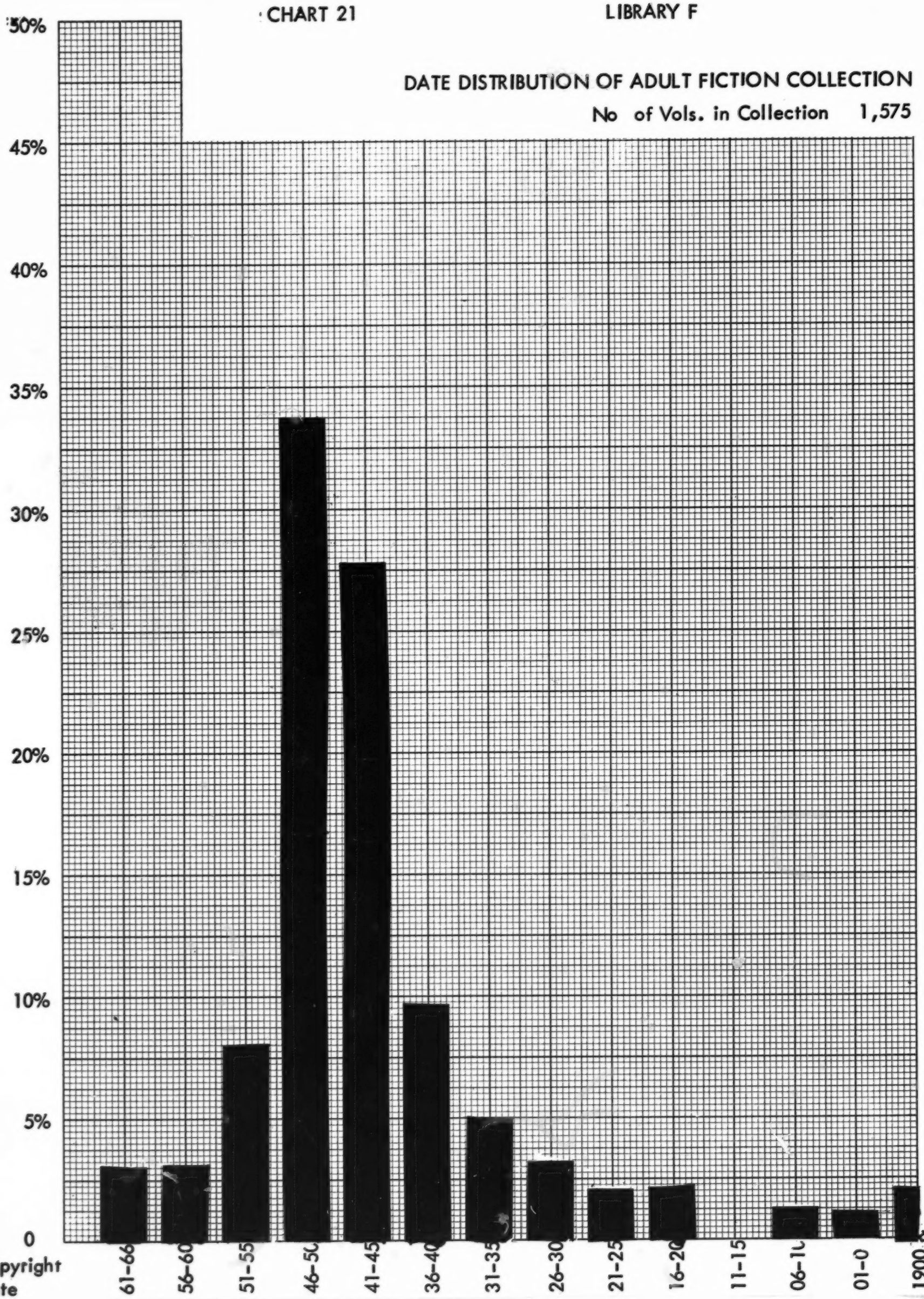


CHART 22

LIBRARY F

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILE COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 2,215

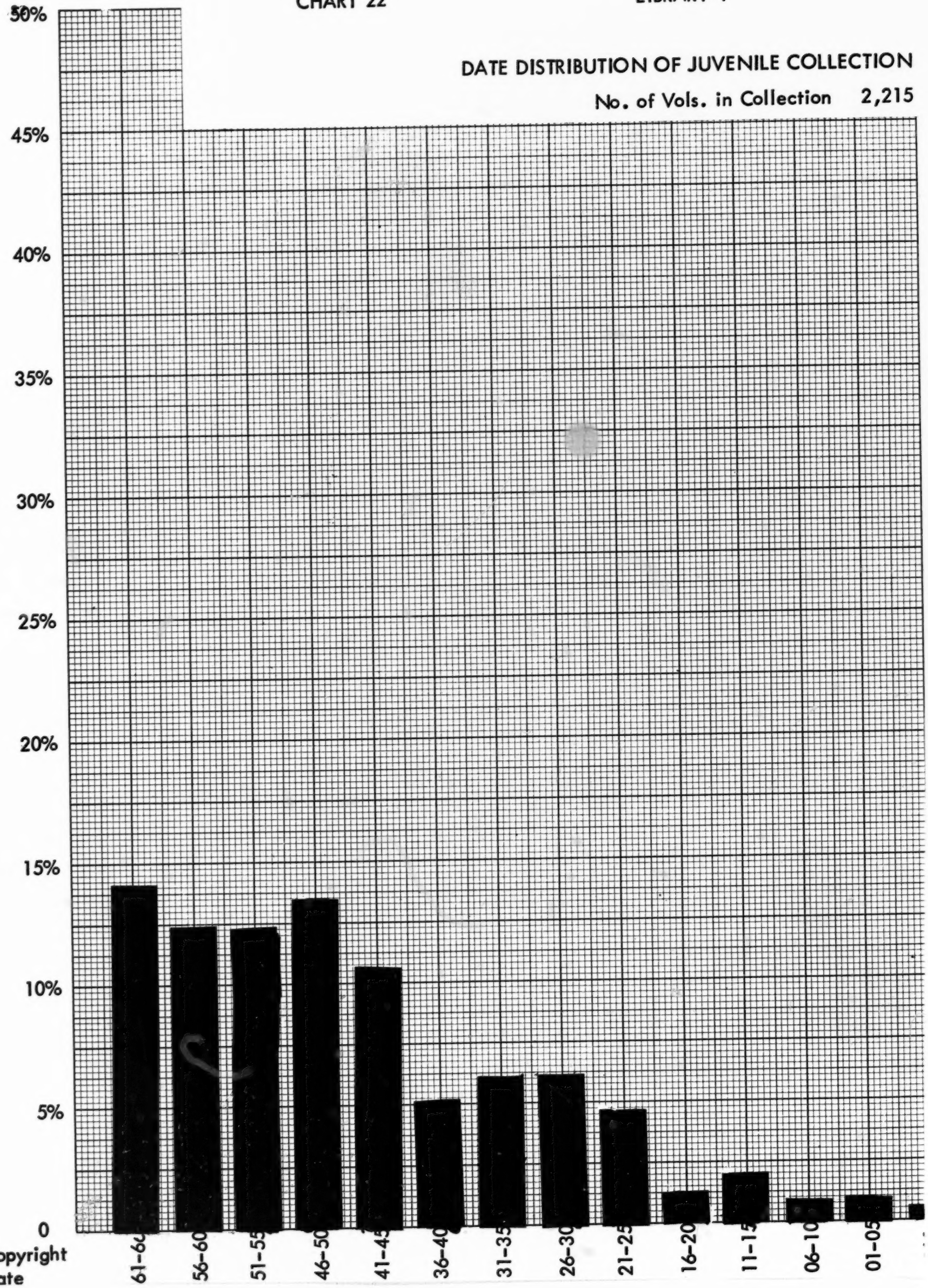


CHART 23

LIBRARY G

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT NON-FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 4,189

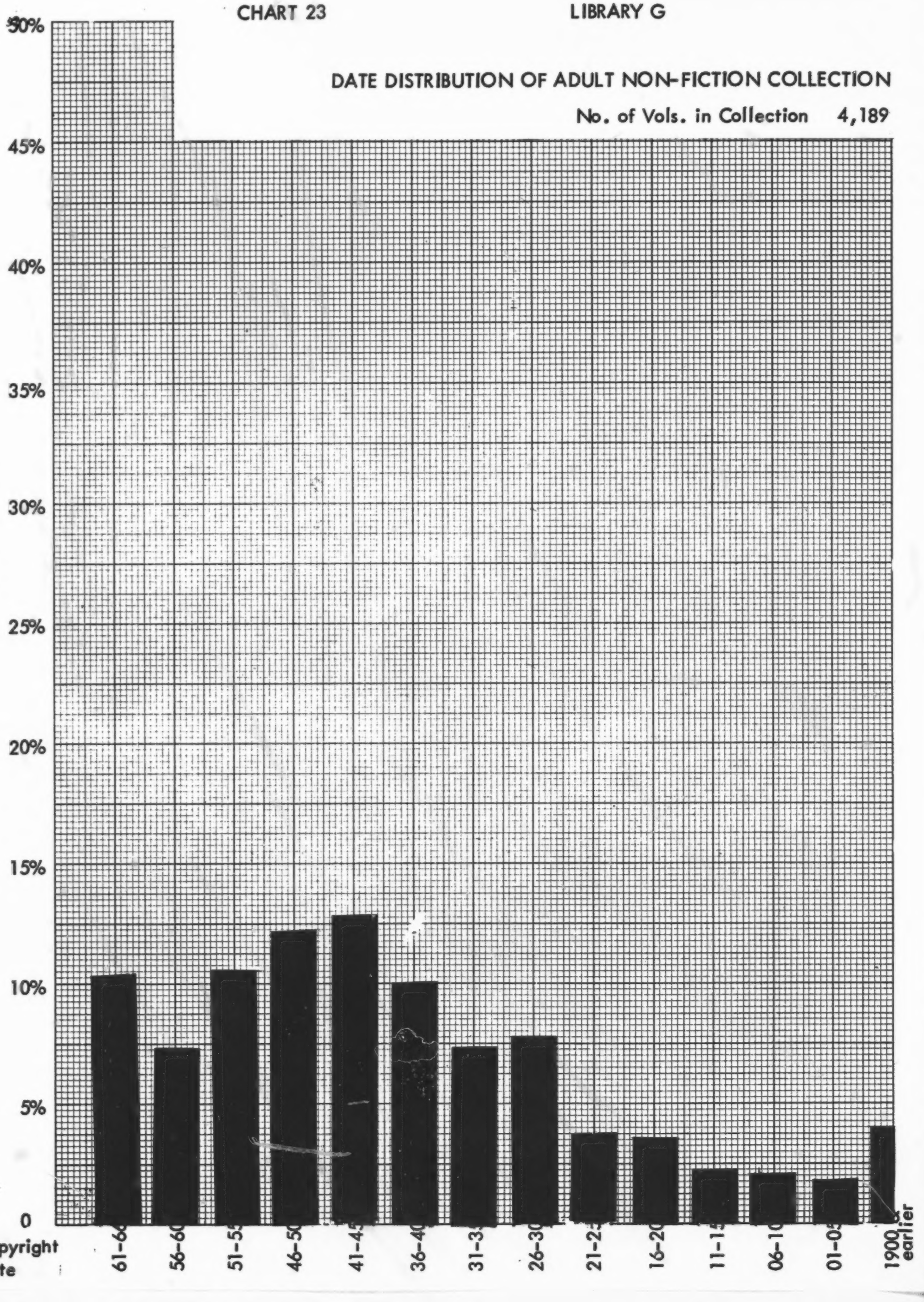


CHART 24

LIBRARY G

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 7,642

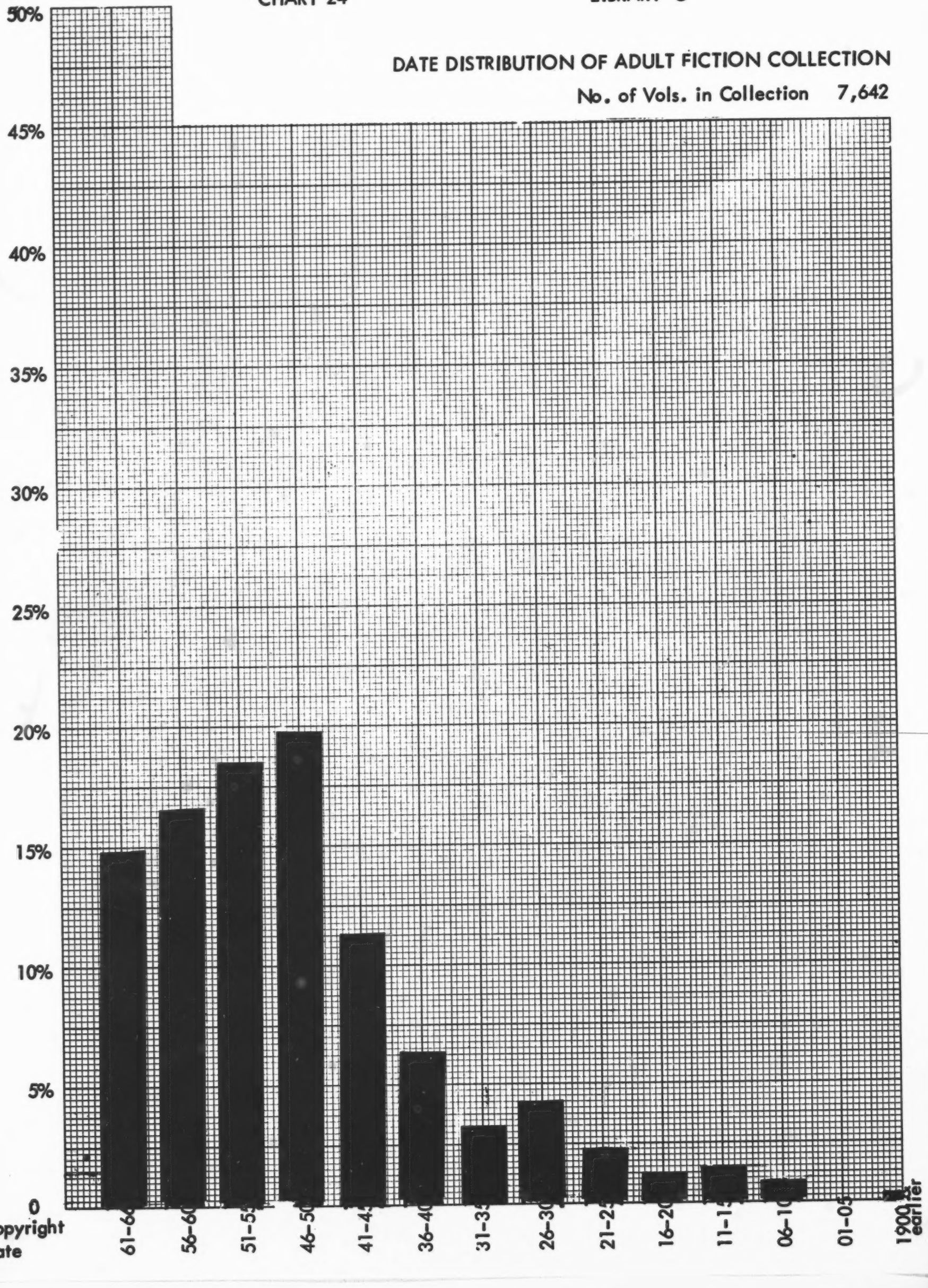


CHART 25

LIBRARY G

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILE COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 1,519

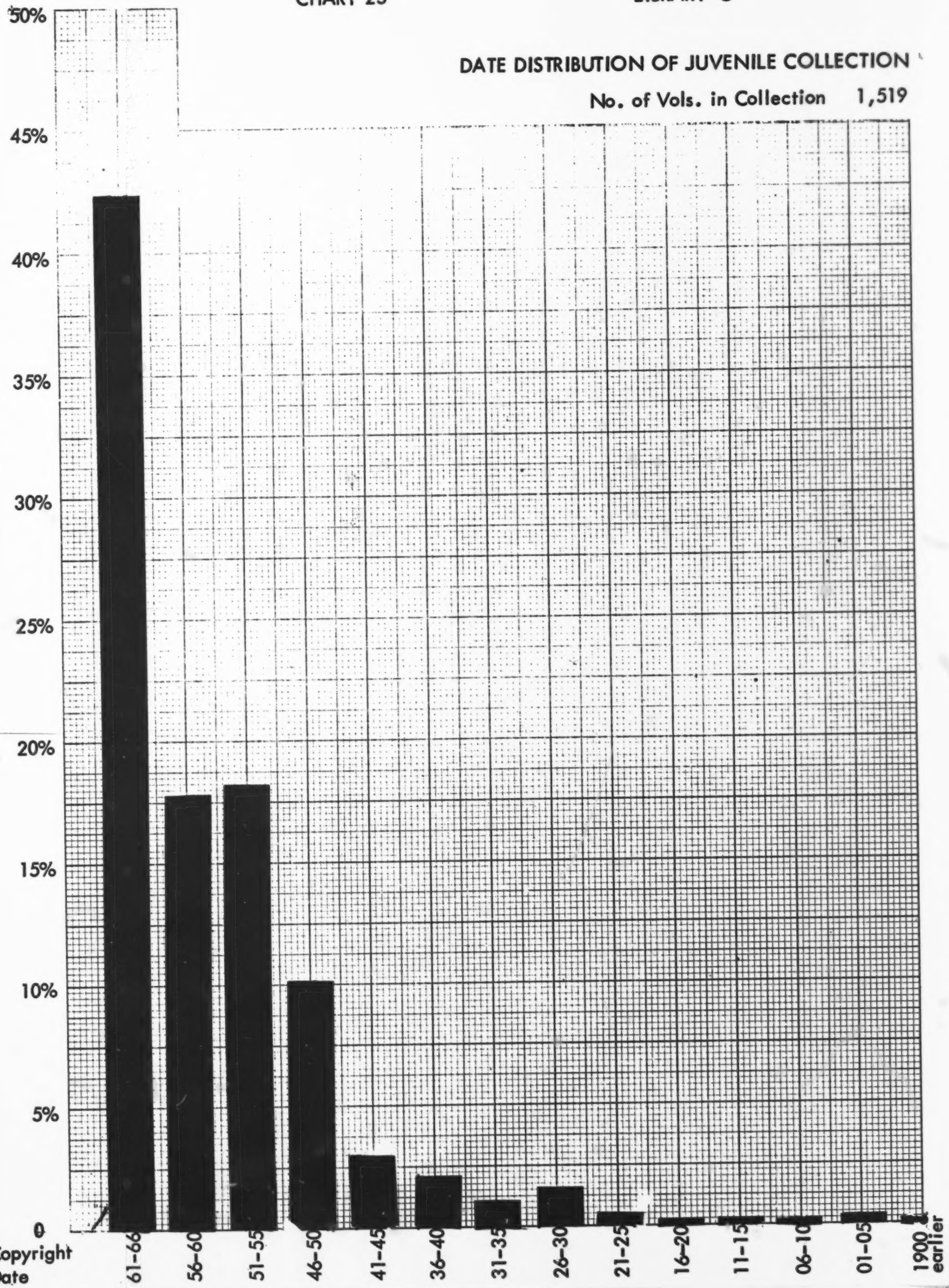


CHART 26

LIBRARY H

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT NON-FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 5,497

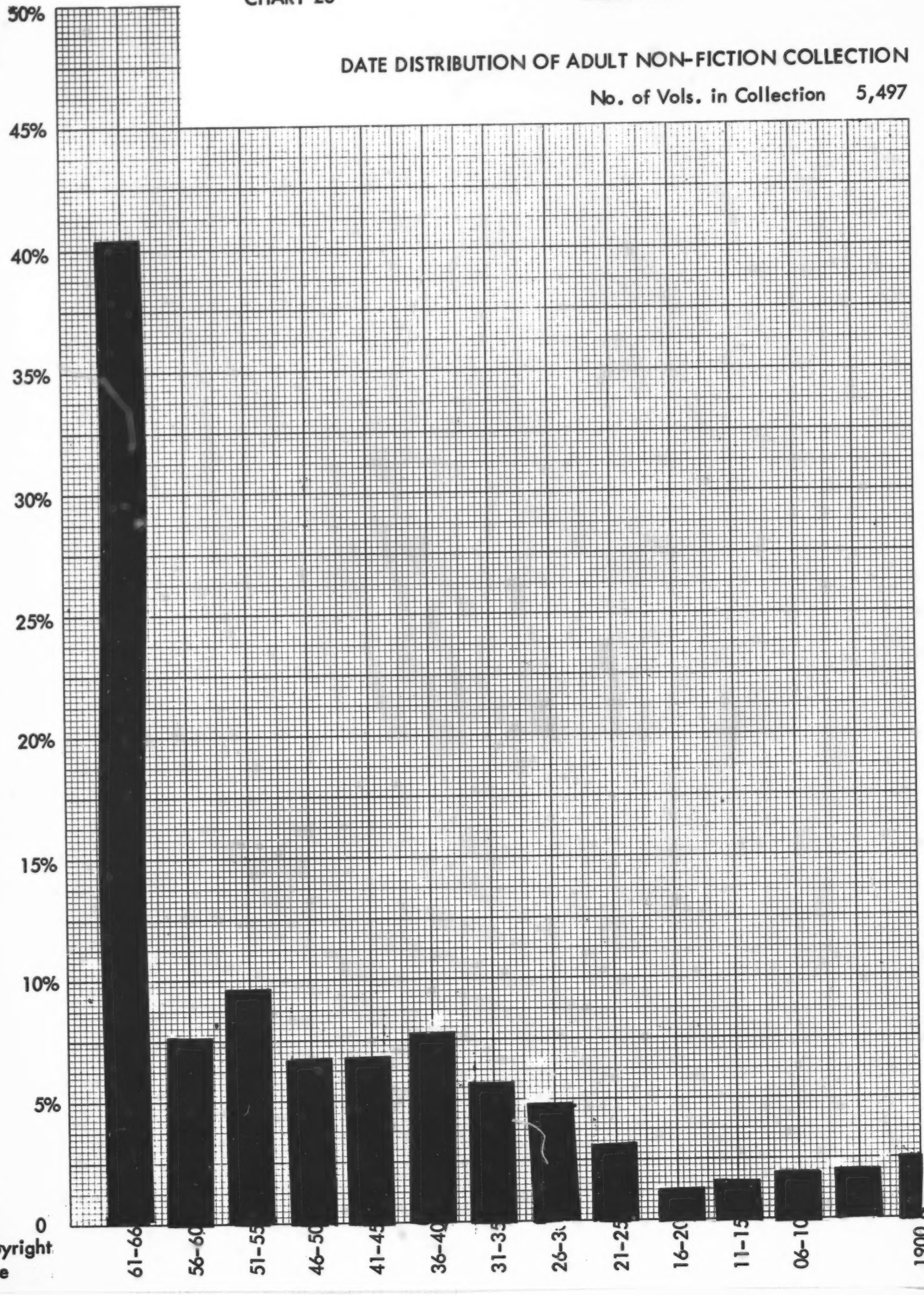


CHART 27

LIBRARY H

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 4,600

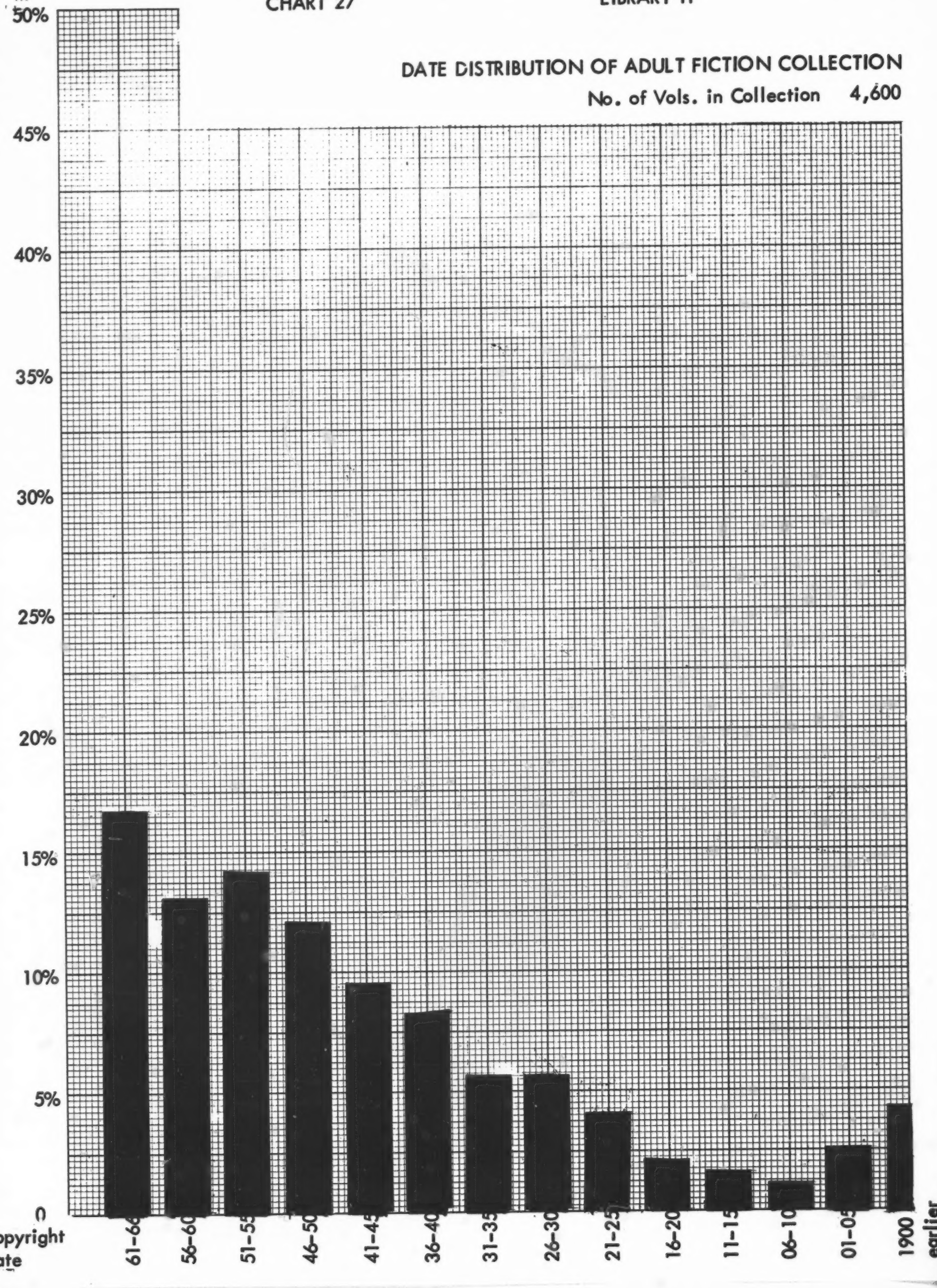


CHART 28

LIBRARY H

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILE COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 2,380

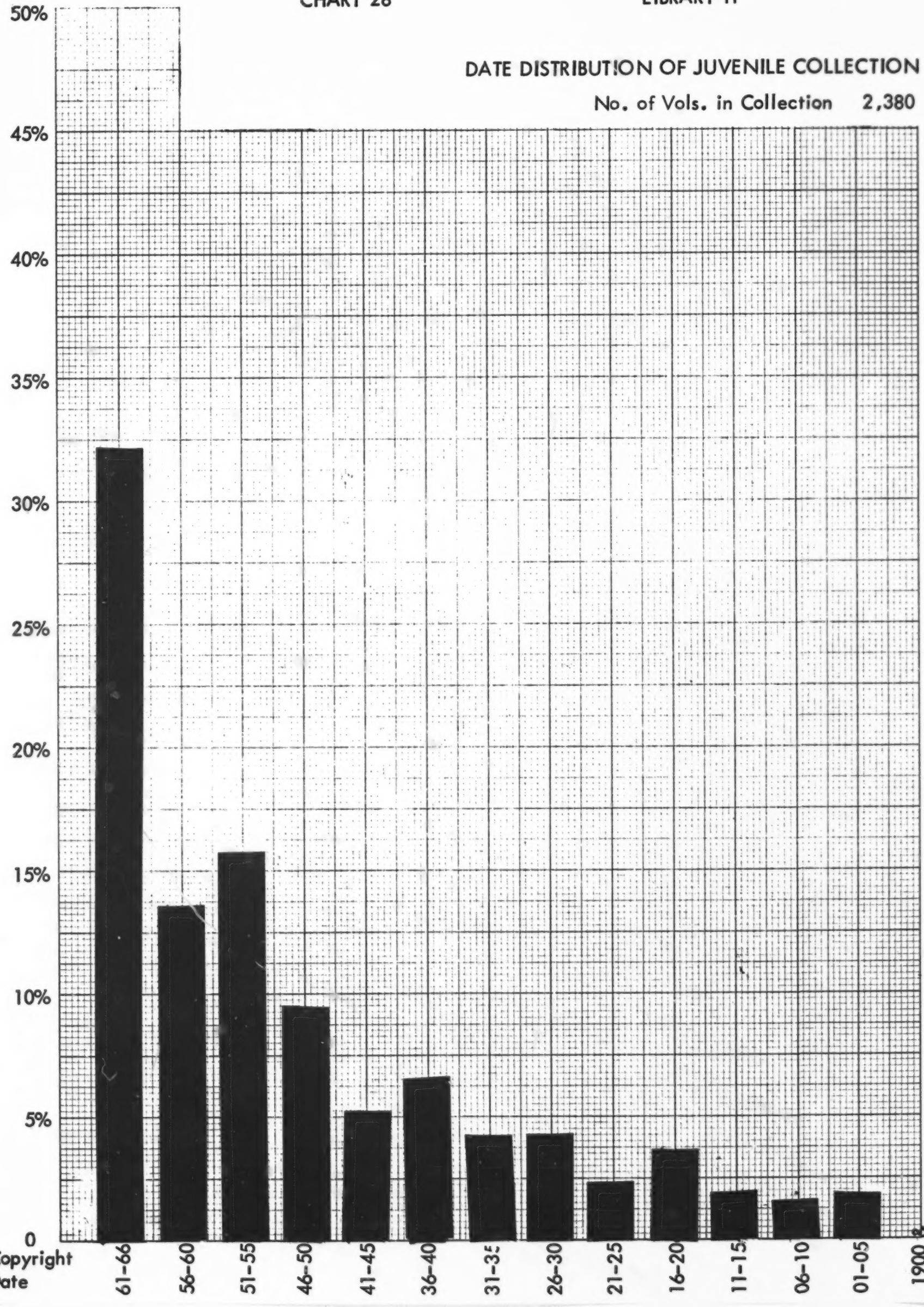


CHART 29

LIBRARY J

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT NON-FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 938

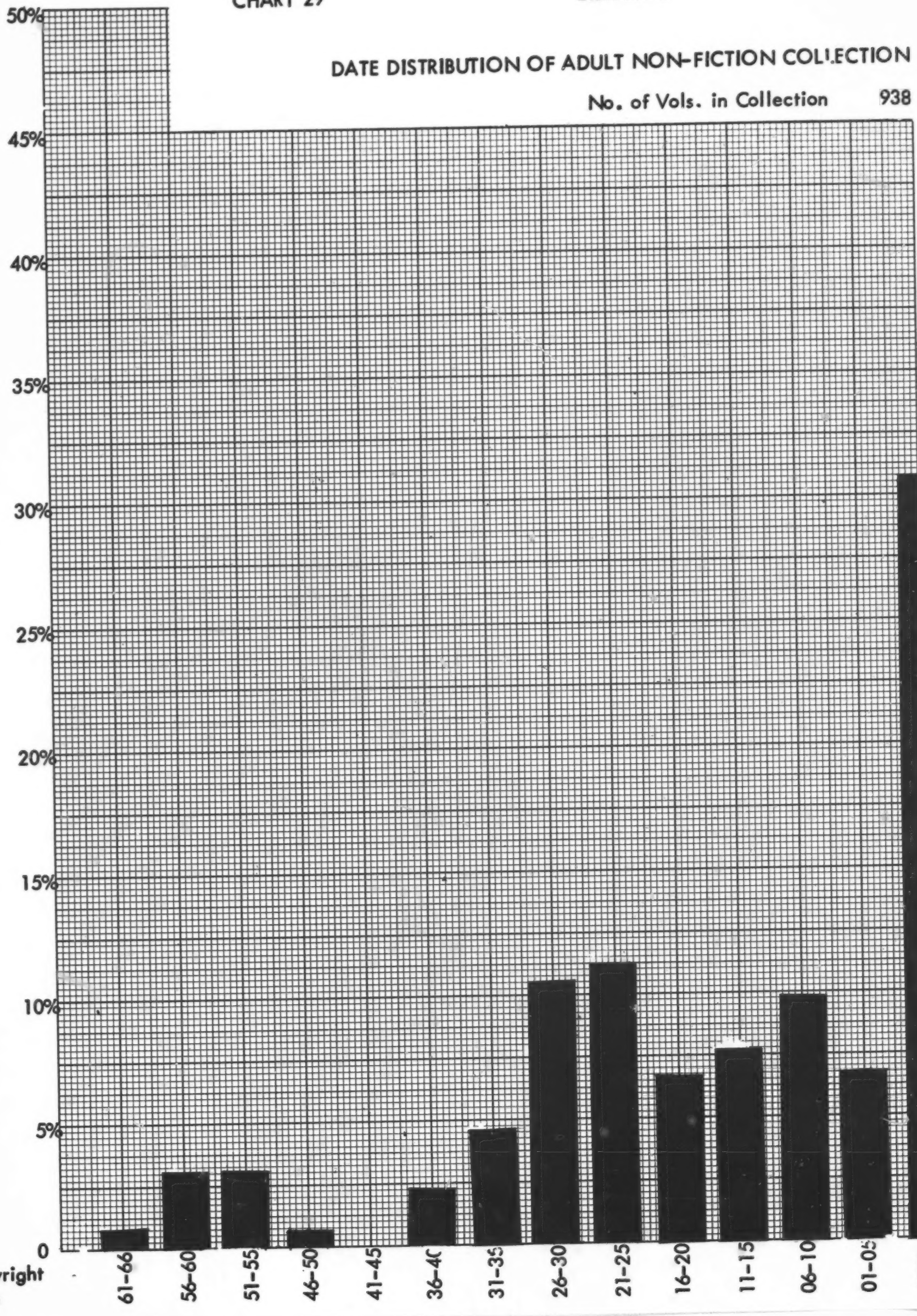


CHART 30

LIBRARY J

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 2,380

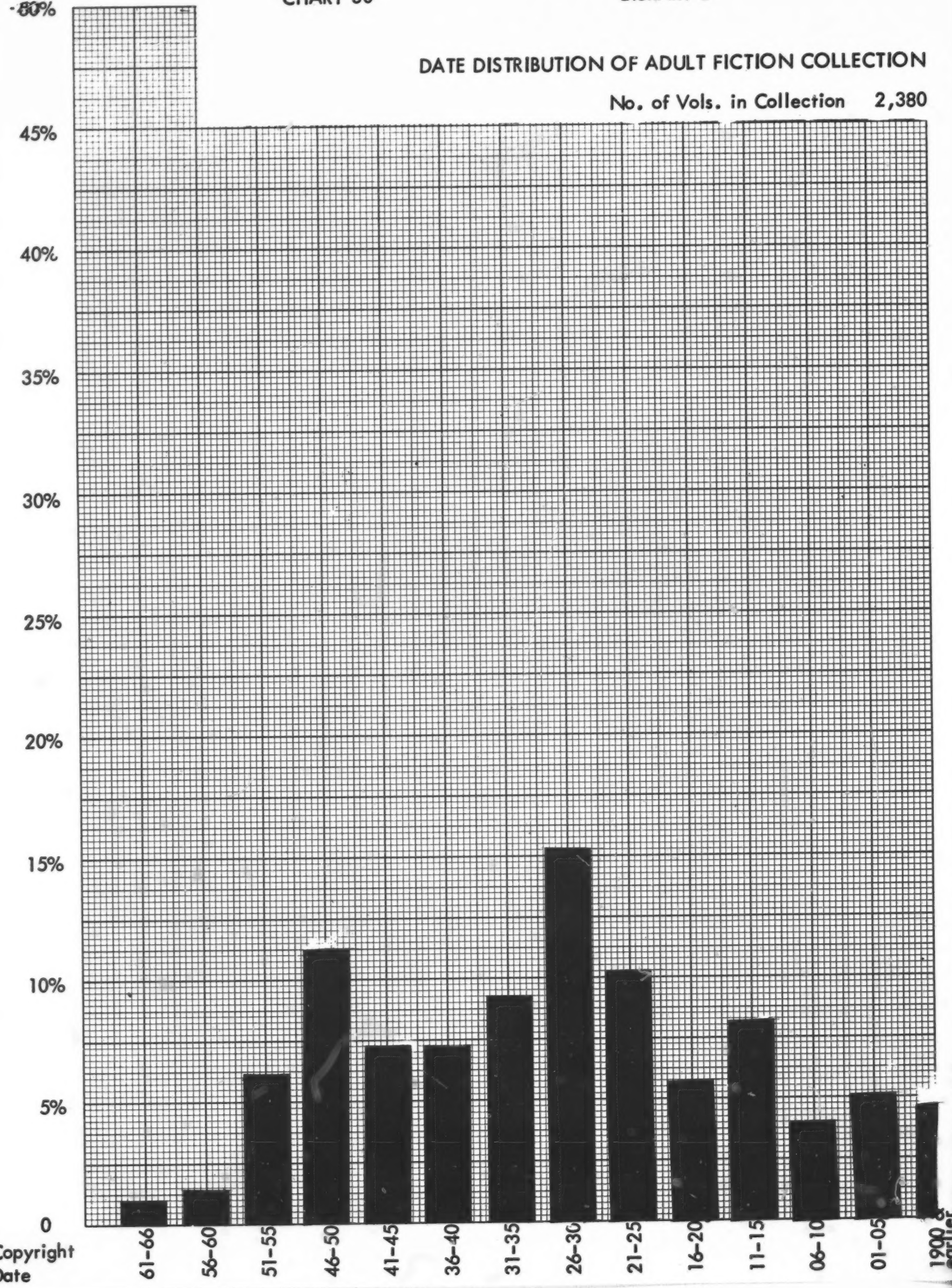


CHART 31

LIBRARY J

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILE COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 840

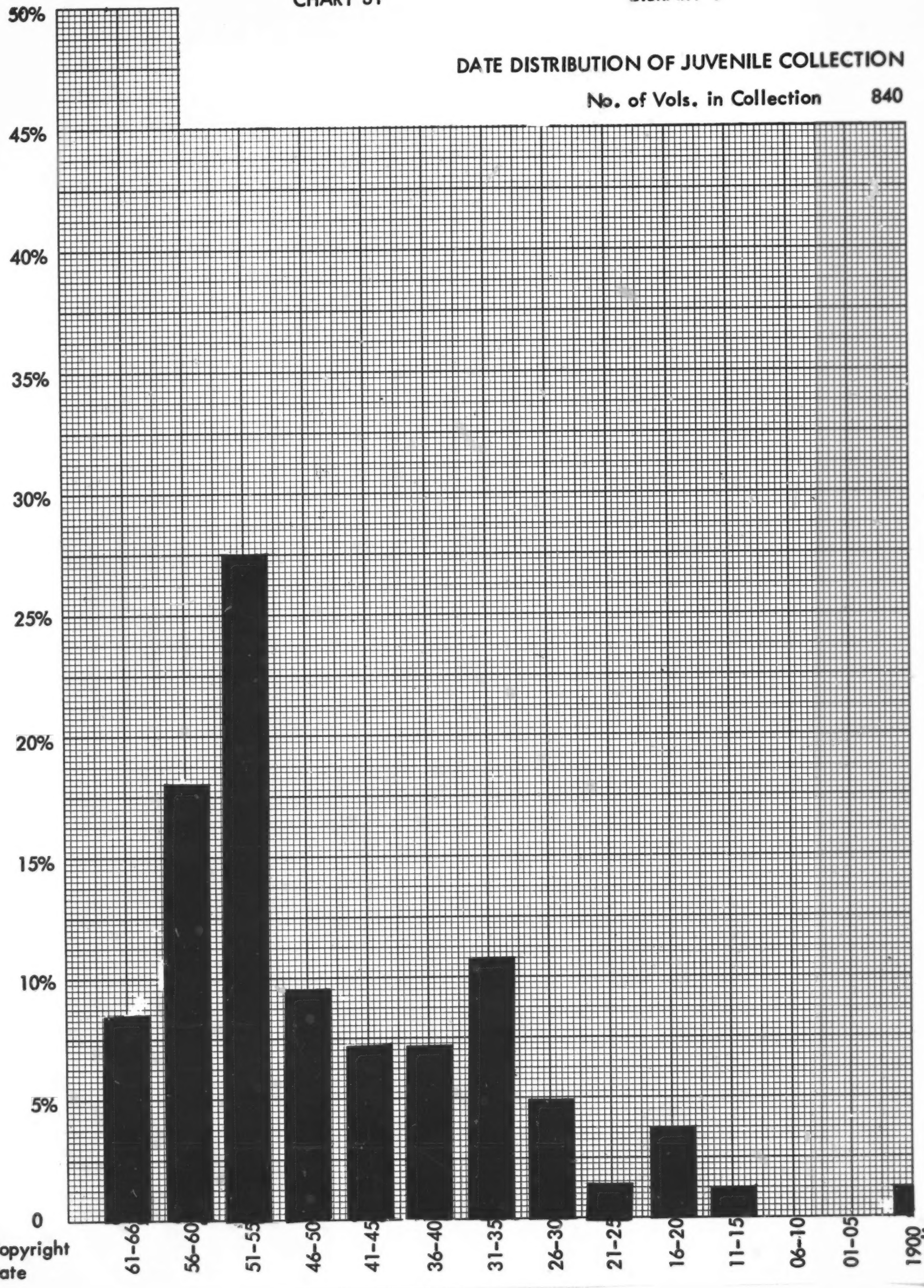


CHART 32

LIBRARY K

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT NON-FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 3,889

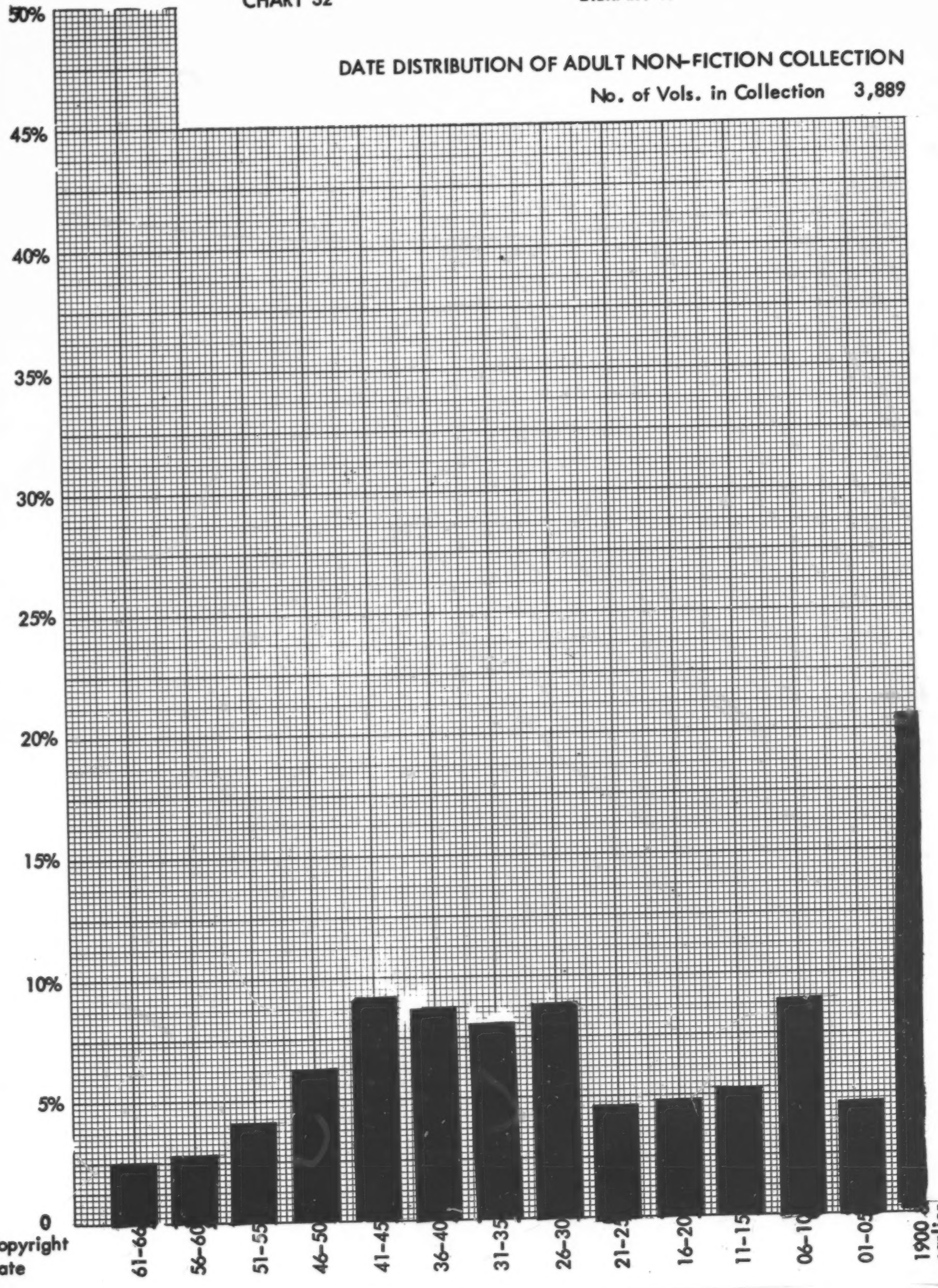


CHART 33

LIBRARY K

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT FICTION COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 3,480

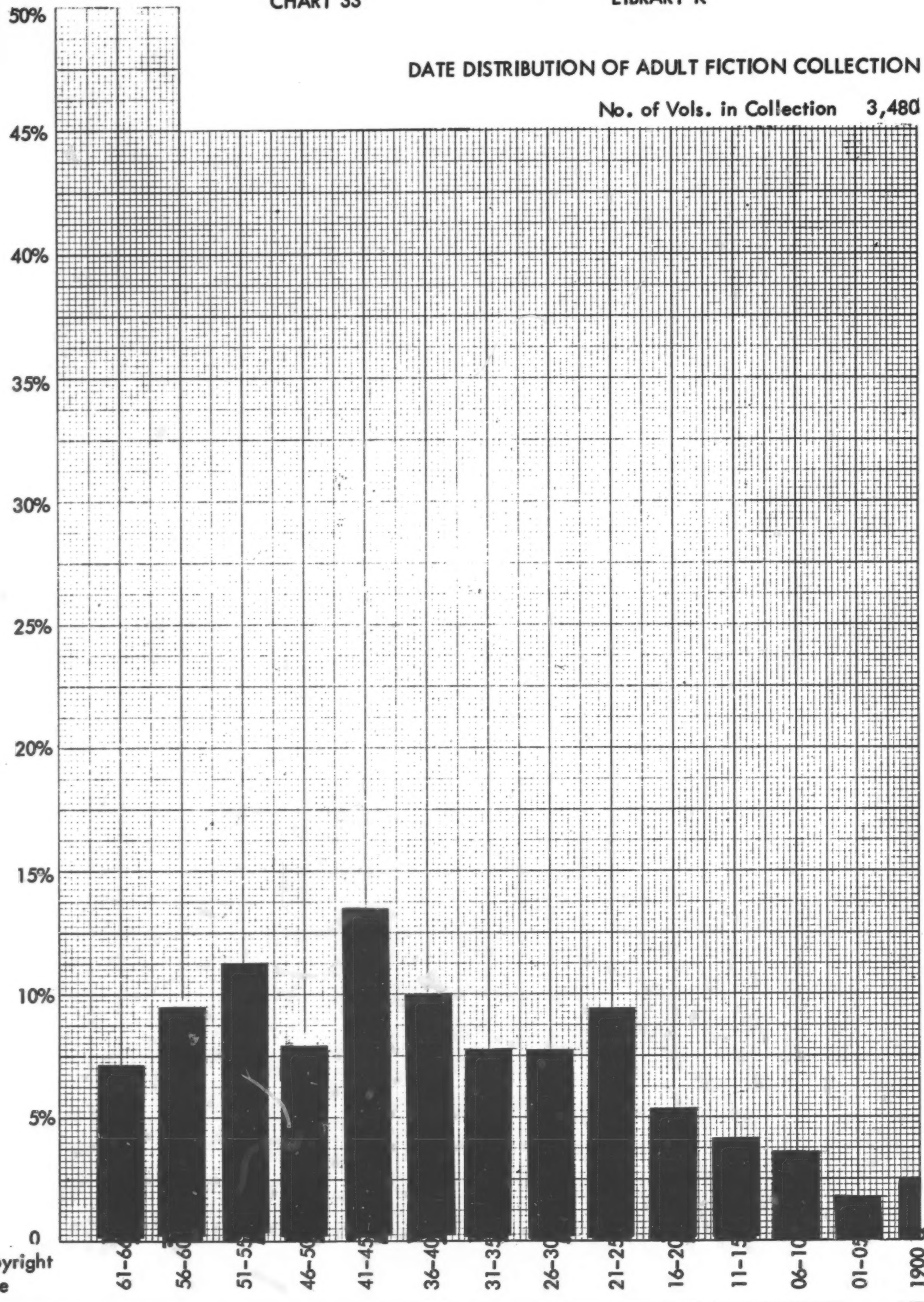


CHART 34

LIBRARY K

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILE COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 1,889

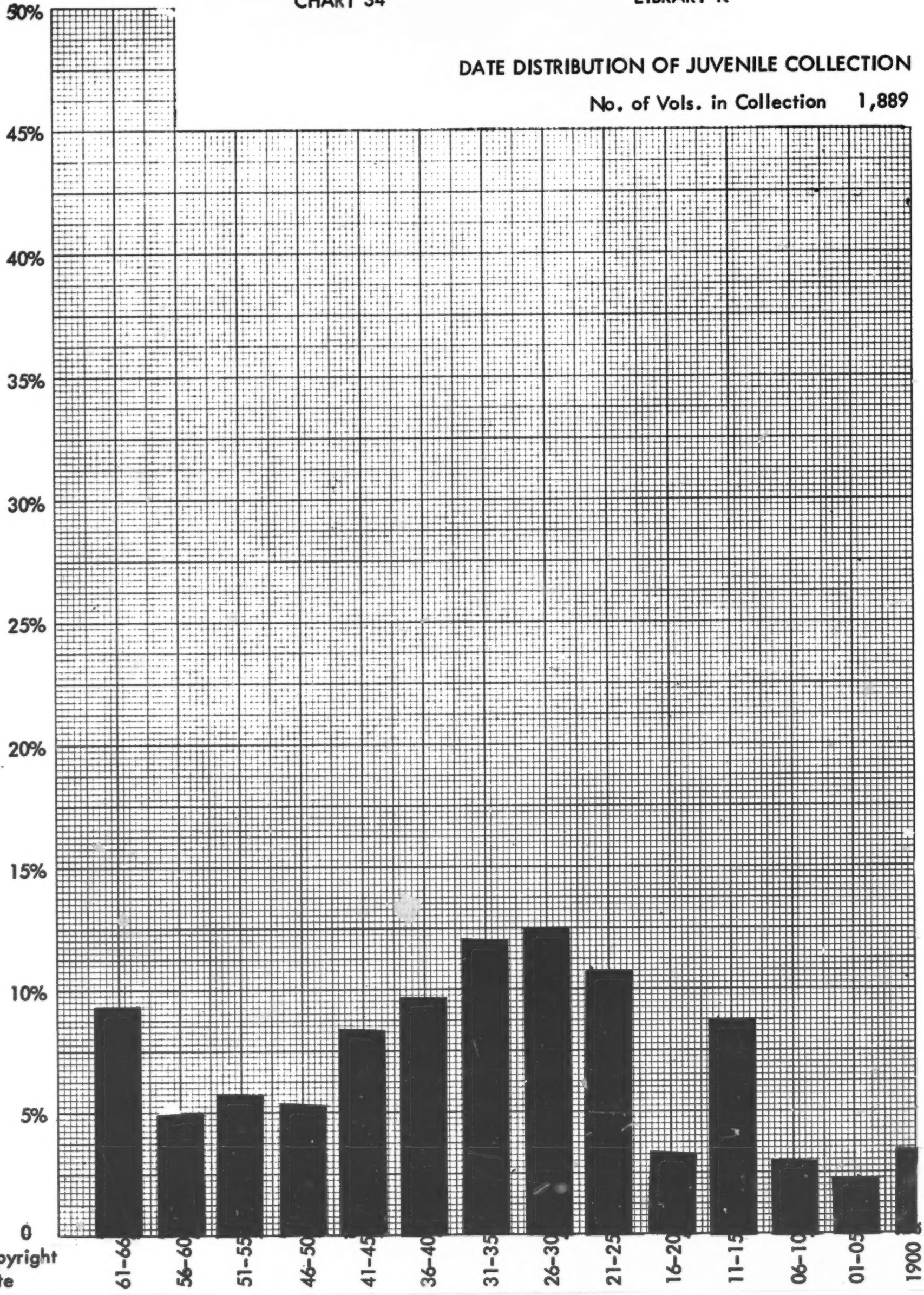


CHART 35

LIBRARY L

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 1,470

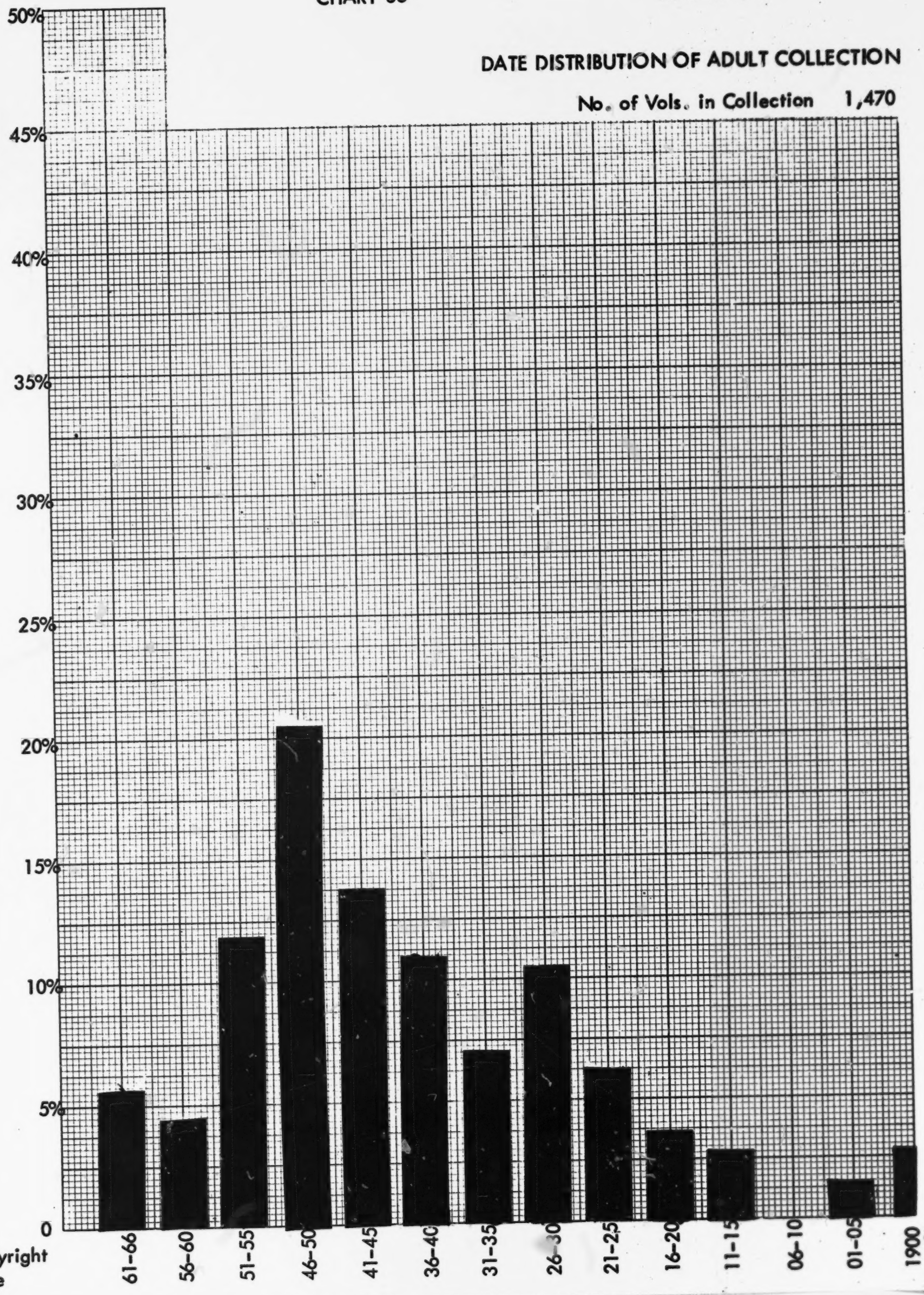
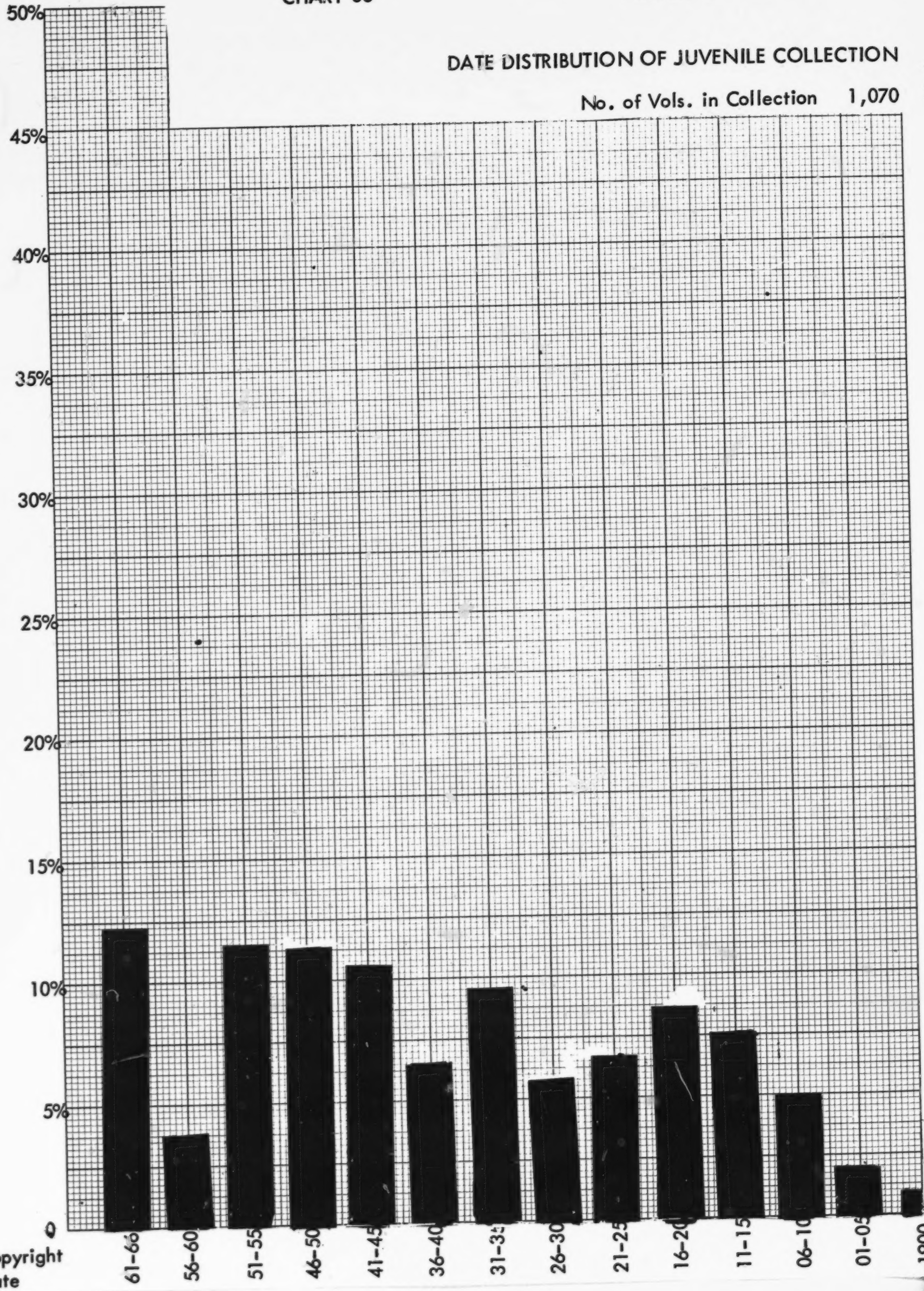


CHART 36

LIBRARY L

DATE DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILE COLLECTION

No. of Vols. in Collection 1,070



Line Graphs

A line graph portrays the change of a variable (number of volumes) over time. Each point on the line represents the percentage of volumes (y-axis) copyrighted before the date (x-axis) indicated. Several comments about these line graphs may aid in their interpretation.

First, the information is presented in percentage figures rather than in absolute number values so that one may compare one library with another or one stratum with another without consideration of total size of collection.

Second, the more nearly vertical the line is between two points on the x-axis, the greater the number of volumes in library holdings of materials copyrighted in the time periods represented by those two points. For example, in Library C (Graph 4) the lines between the two points, 1966-1960, are more vertical than those between the points, 1935-1930, thus indicating a much higher percentage holding of titles in the 1966-1960 interval. In Library F (Graph 7) the nearly horizontal line on the non-fiction curve between the points 1966-1960 indicates that the Library holds virtually no items copyrighted within this time period.

Third, these graphs reveal whether or not there has been uniformity in the development of the several parts of the collection. A library, in the long run, which has purchased and weeded books at a consistent rate for all parts of the collection will be shown to have lines close together. For example, Library G (Graph 8) shows wide variation in the three parts of the collection. The graph reveals that Library G has given considerably more attention to the development

and maintenance of the juvenile collection than it has given to the adult collections. Further, the graph reflects either that more attention has been paid to the adult fiction collection than to the adult non-fiction collection or that adult non-fiction materials are considered to have value regardless of age. Library C (Graph 4) is an example of consistent treatment of all parts of the collection.

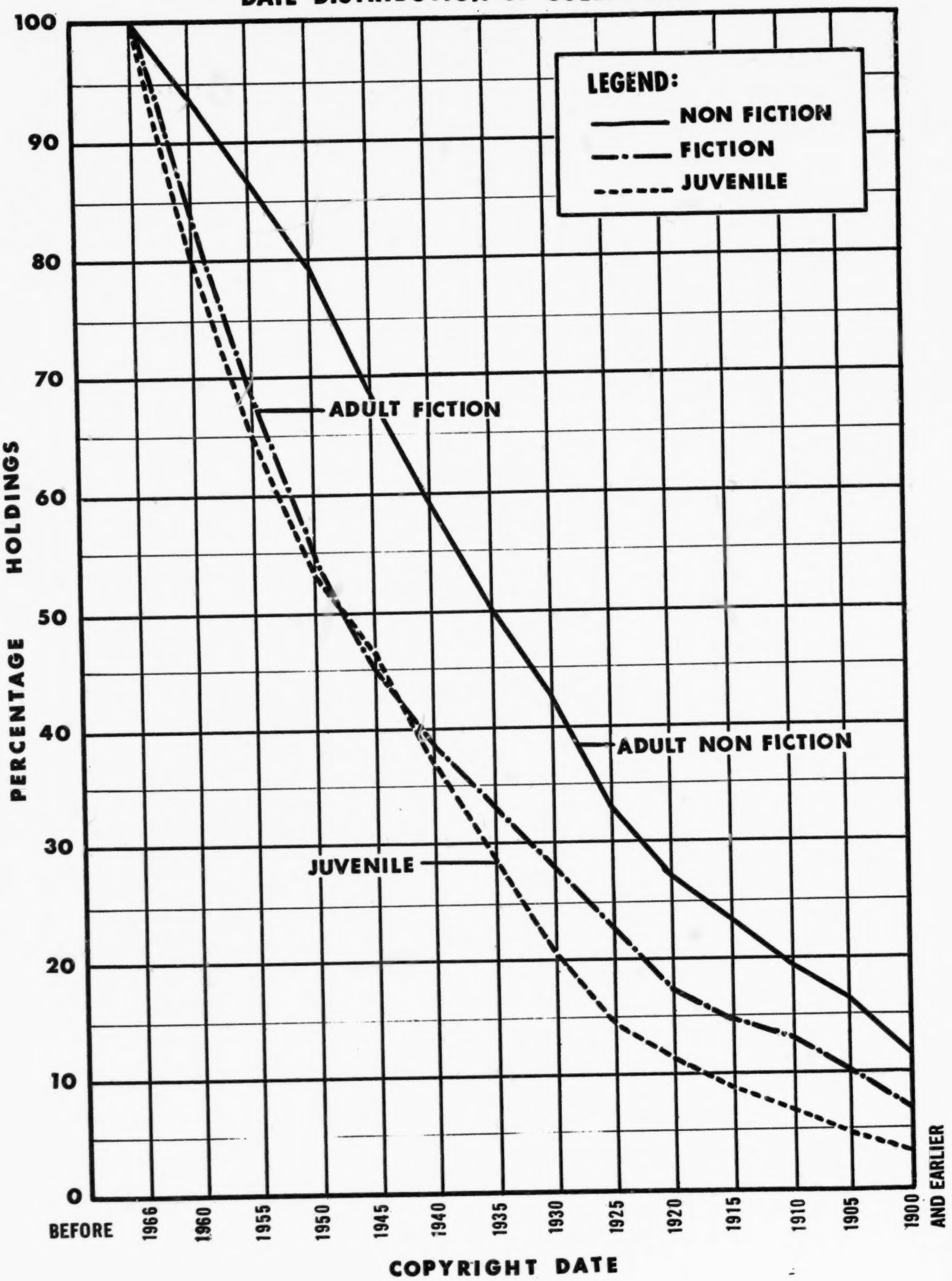
Fourth, this presentation makes possible a comparison of each library with the "model" curves representing the date distribution of titles sampled in the Standard Catalog for Public Libraries, the Children's Catalog, and the Fiction Catalog, our arbitrarily selected norms. To facilitate this comparison, the "model" curves have been drawn on acetate plastic sheets (see pocket inserts, Graphs 14, 15, and 16, inside back cover) which can be used as overlays on any of the individual library graphs. Placing Graph 14 over the Pottsville Library's graph (Graph 1), for example, we can see that the date distribution curve for Pottsville's non-fiction collection verges considerably from the norm, and the variations can be identified by five-year intervals. The date distribution curve of Library B's juvenile collection (Graph 3) matches closely the curve representing titles in the Children's Catalog (Graph 16). The fiction collections in all but one of the libraries produce a date distribution curve considerably older than the curve derived from the sample of titles in the Fiction Catalog (Graph 15). Taking the 1950 time period, for example, the variation from the norm is 10% in Library D, 20% in Library G, 25% in Library H.

Even where a library's date distribution curve follows closely the curve produced by analysis of one of the three selection tools used, it does not necessarily follow that the collection is "good." Like all other standards, the date distribution factor can be distorted. In itself, the collection curve can provide a useful index to the character of a collection; other decisions have to be made about the quality and usefulness of specific titles.

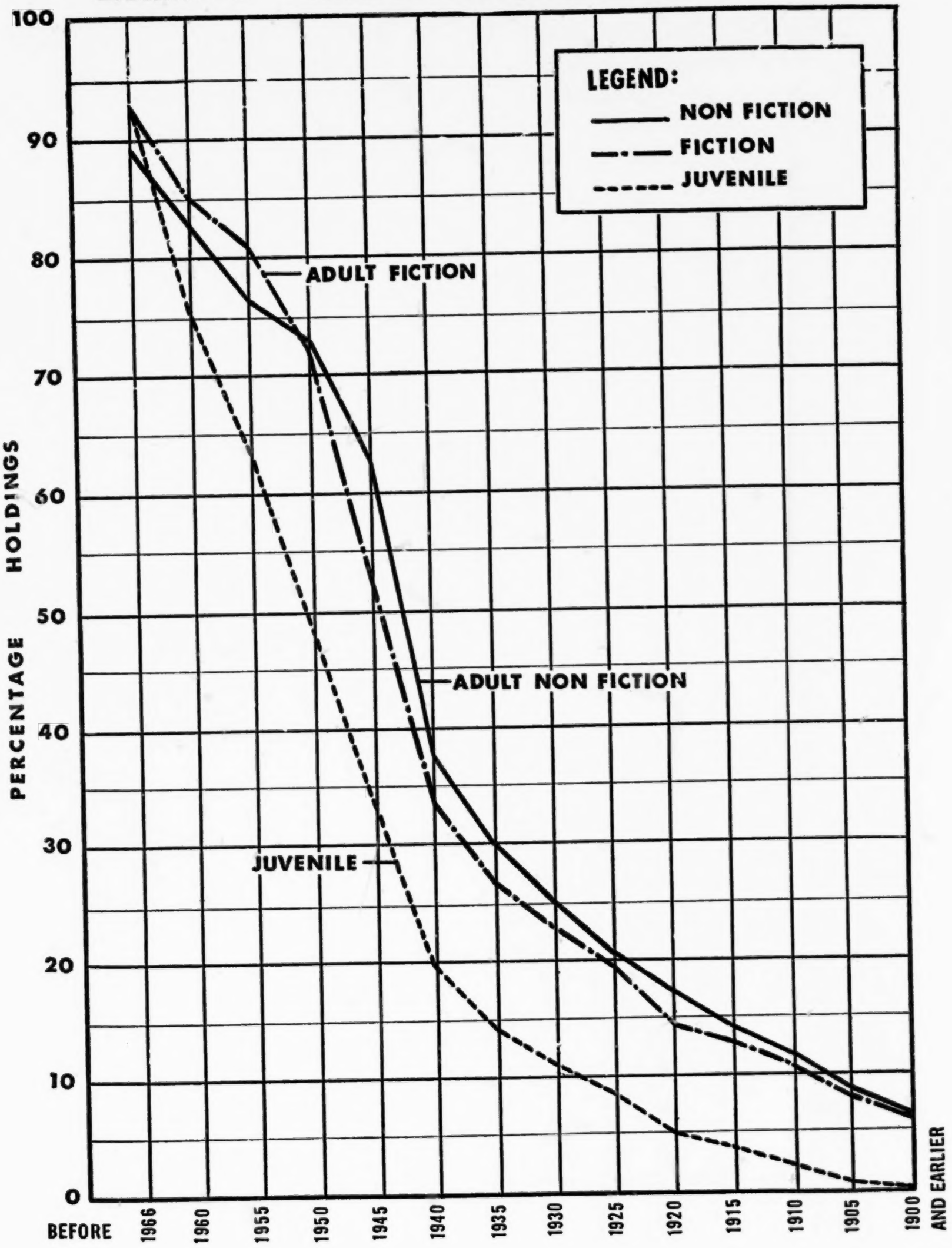
GRAPH 1

POTTSVILLE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

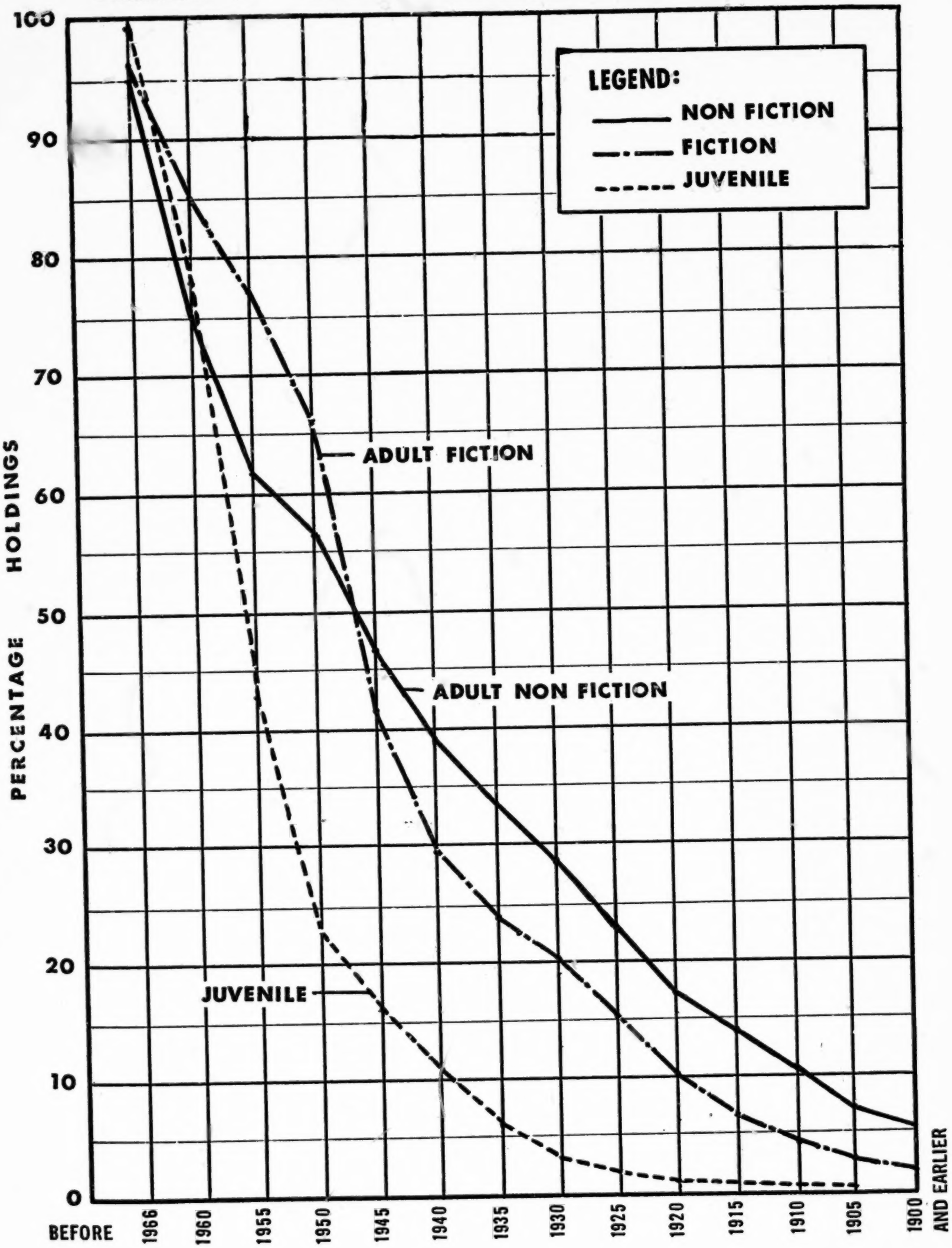
DATE DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIONS



LIBRARY A - DATE DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIONS

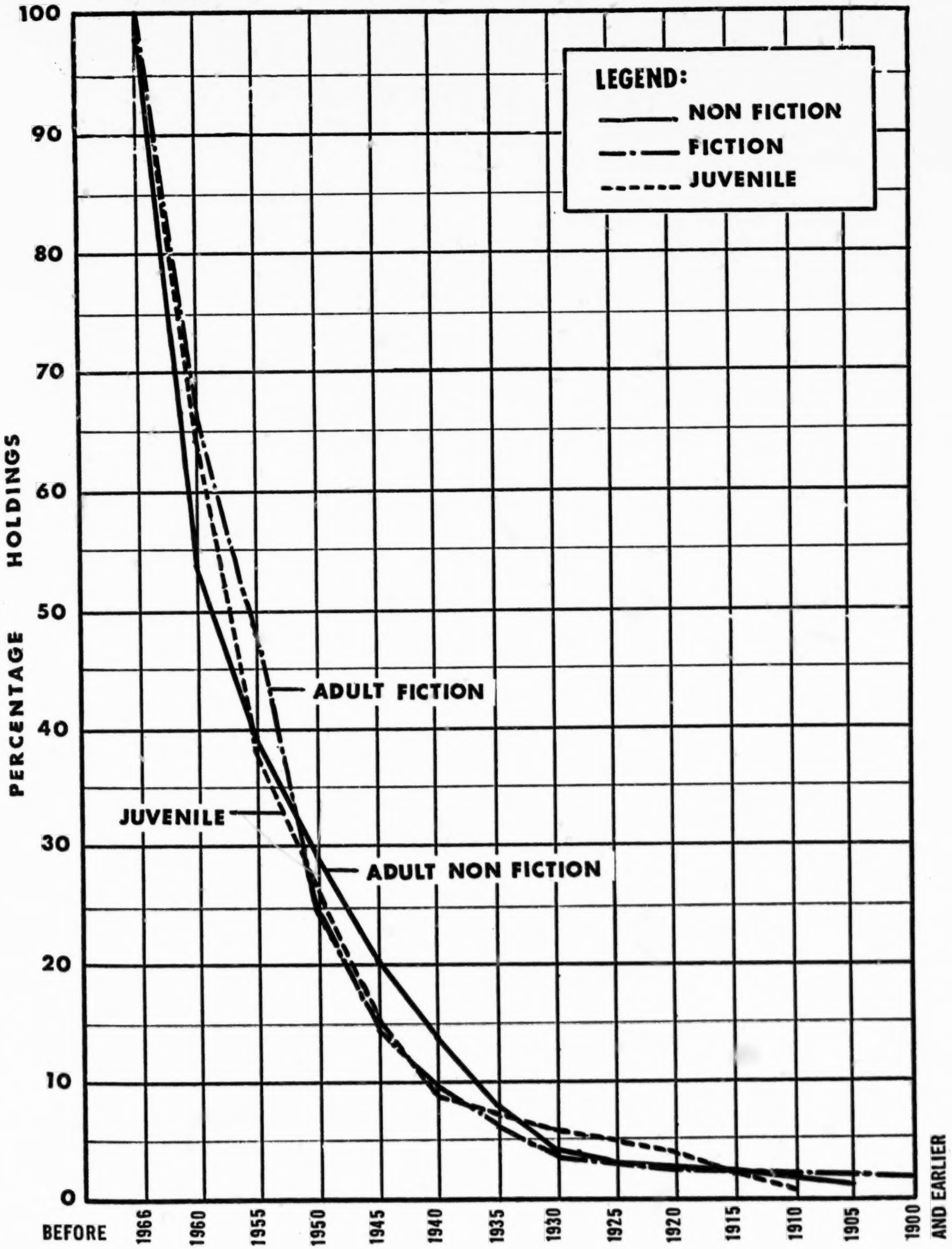


LIBRARY B - DATE DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIONS

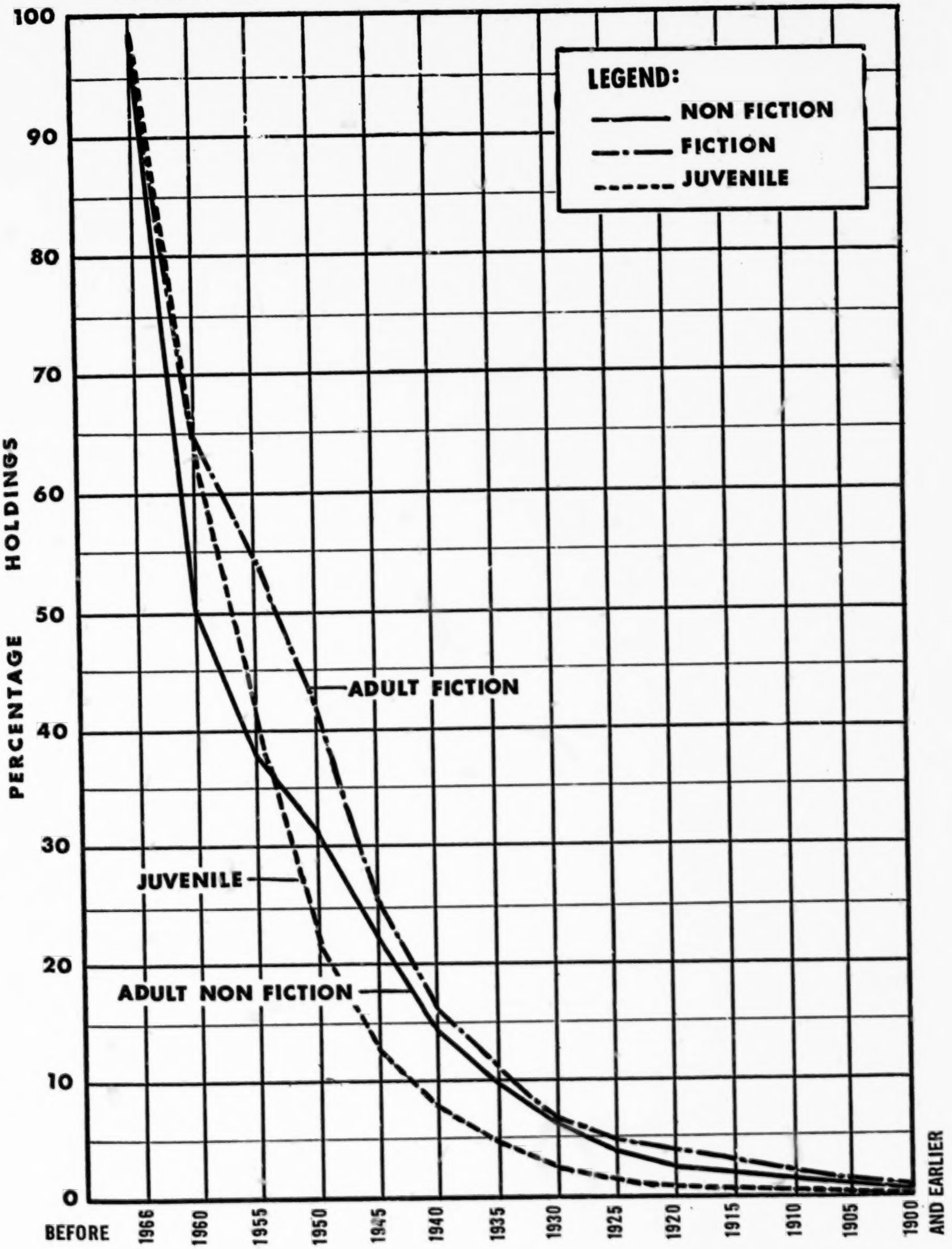


GRAPH 4

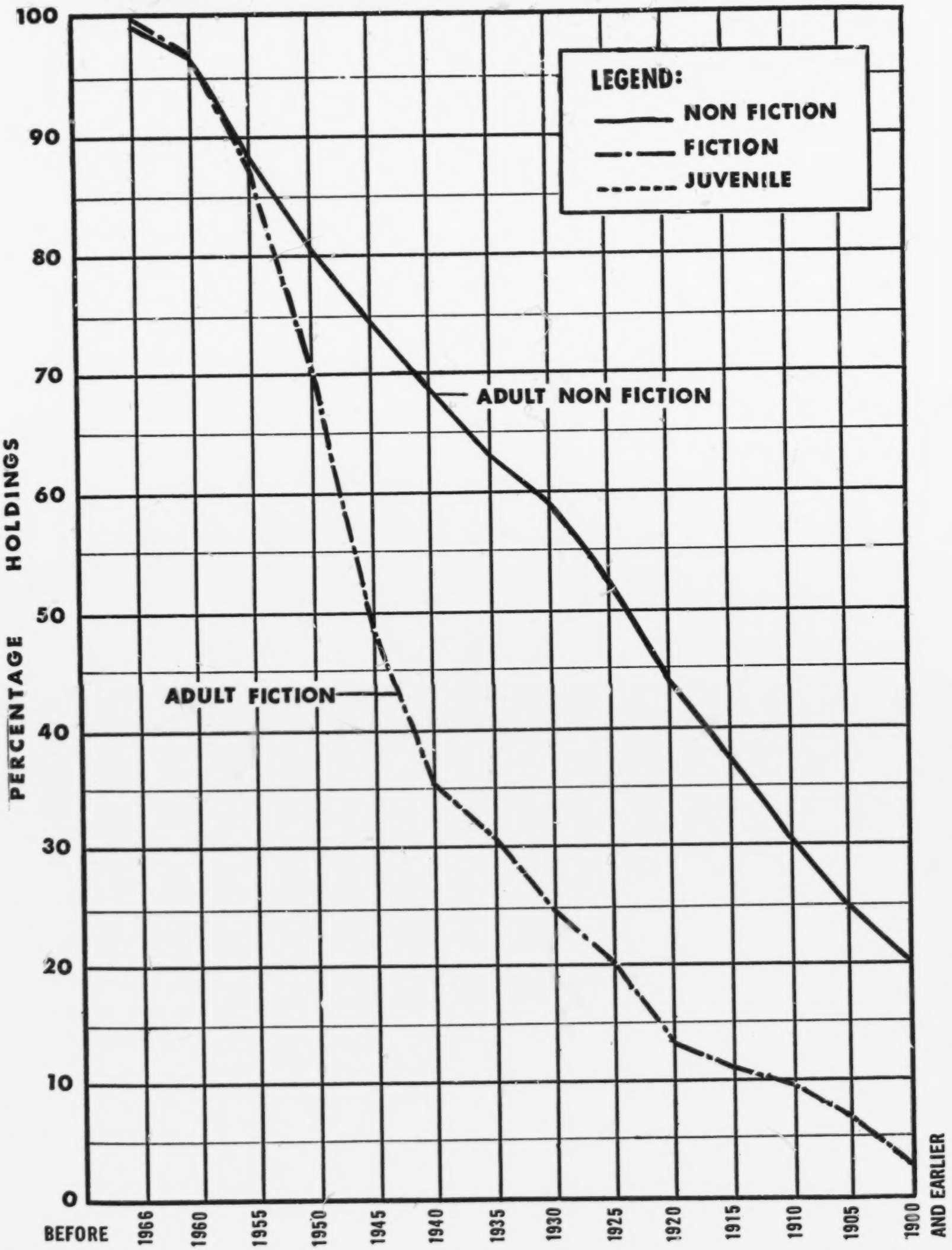
LIBRARY C - DATE DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIONS



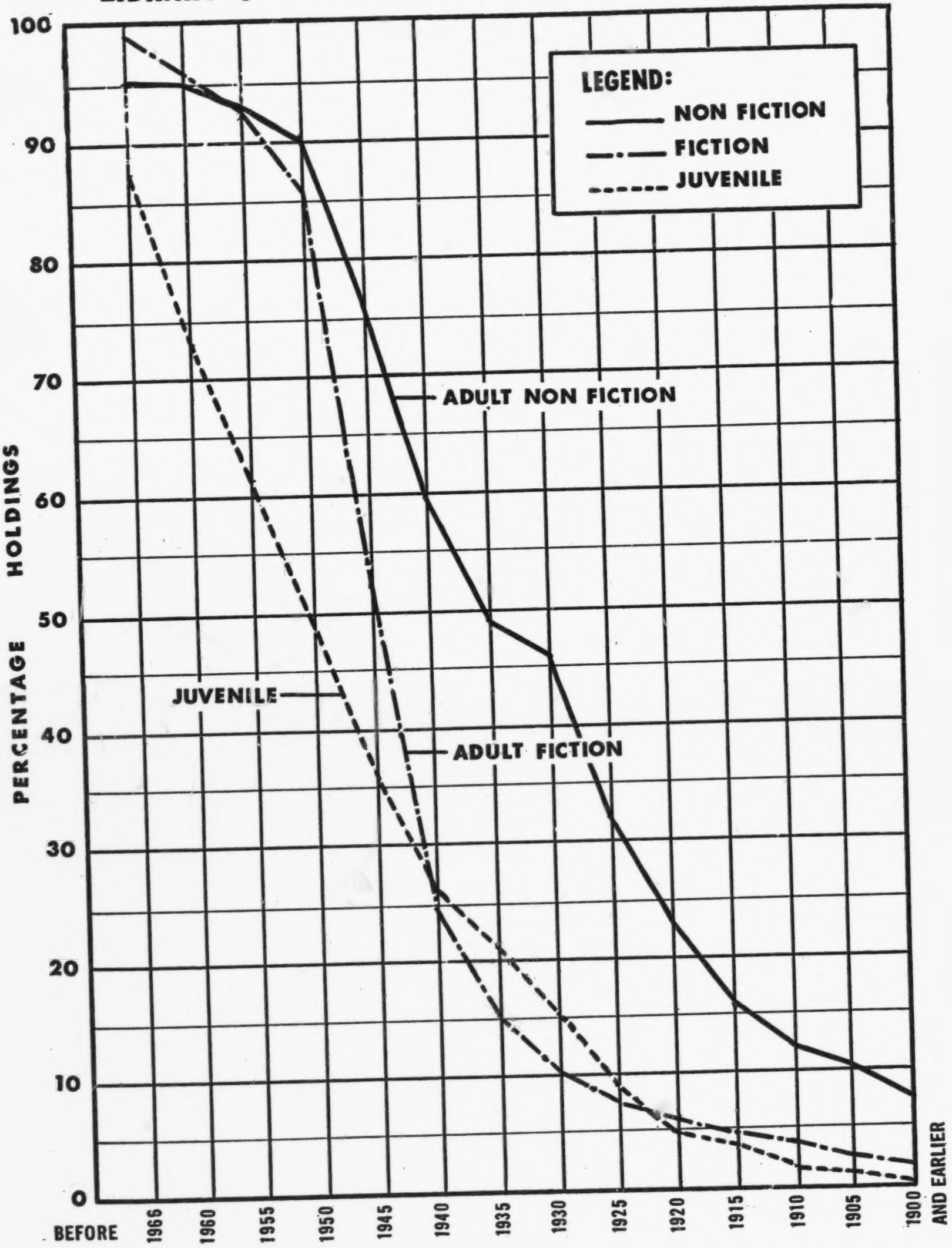
LIBRARY D - DATE DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIONS



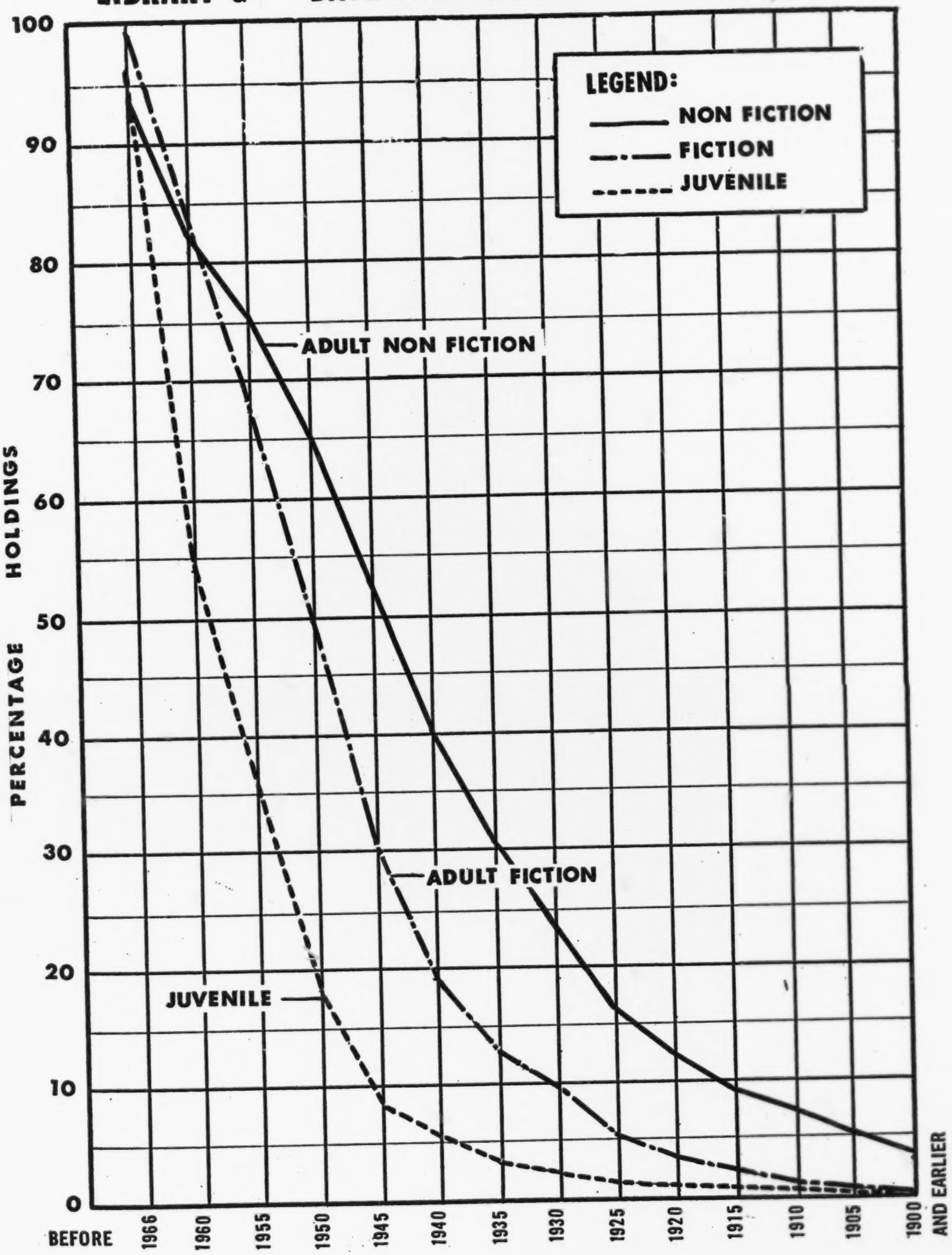
LIBRARY E - DATE DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIONS



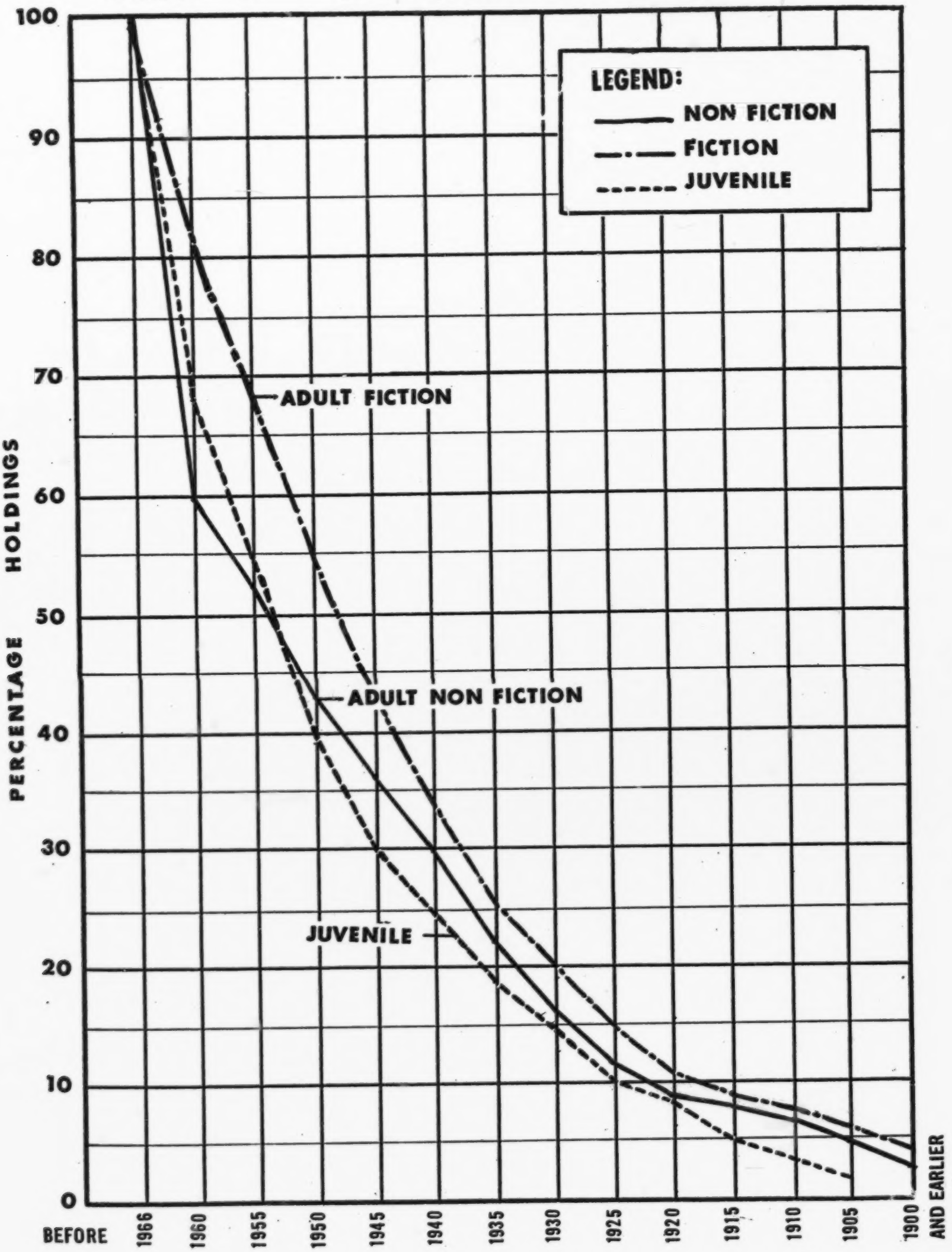
LIBRARY F - DATE DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIONS



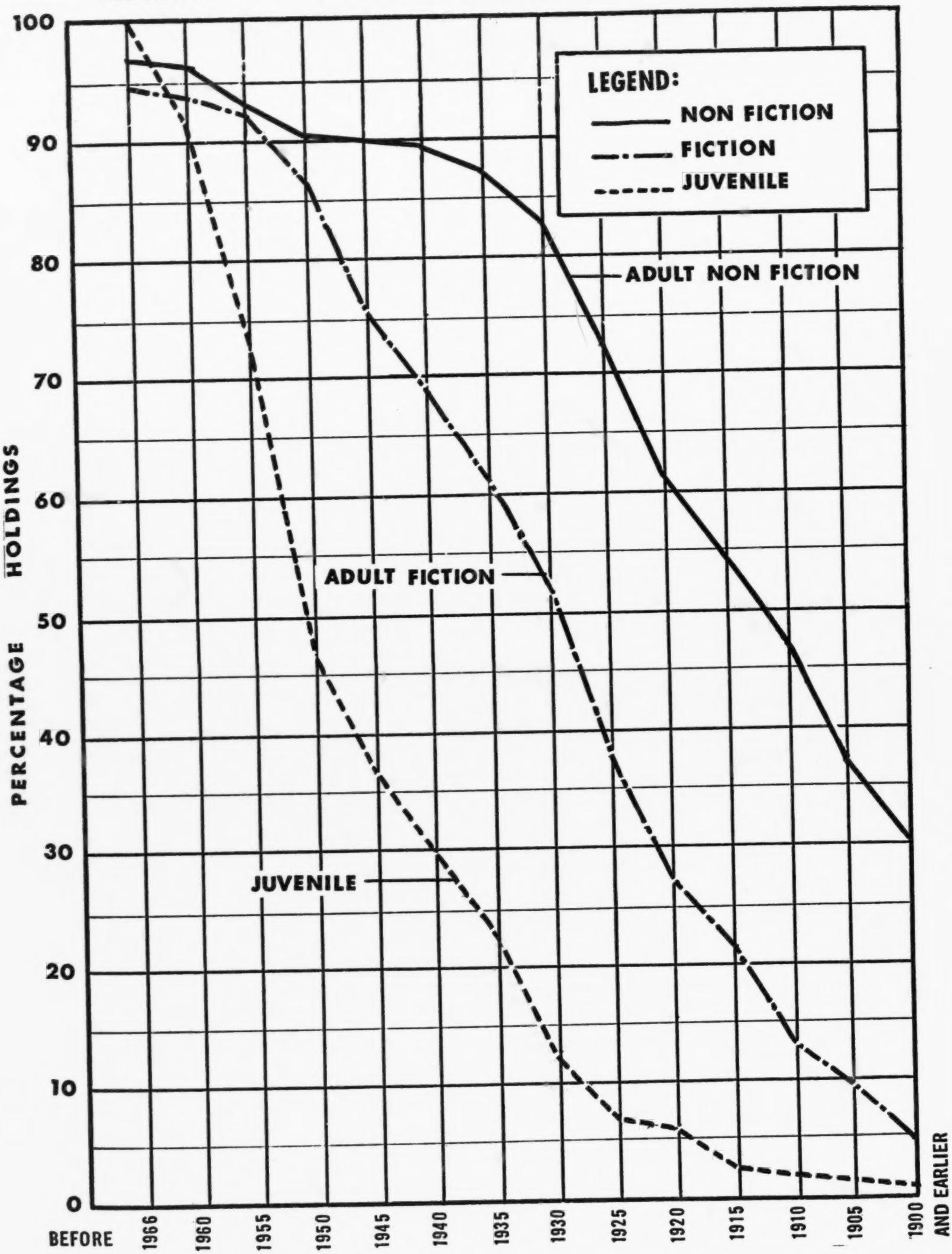
LIBRARY G - DATE DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIONS



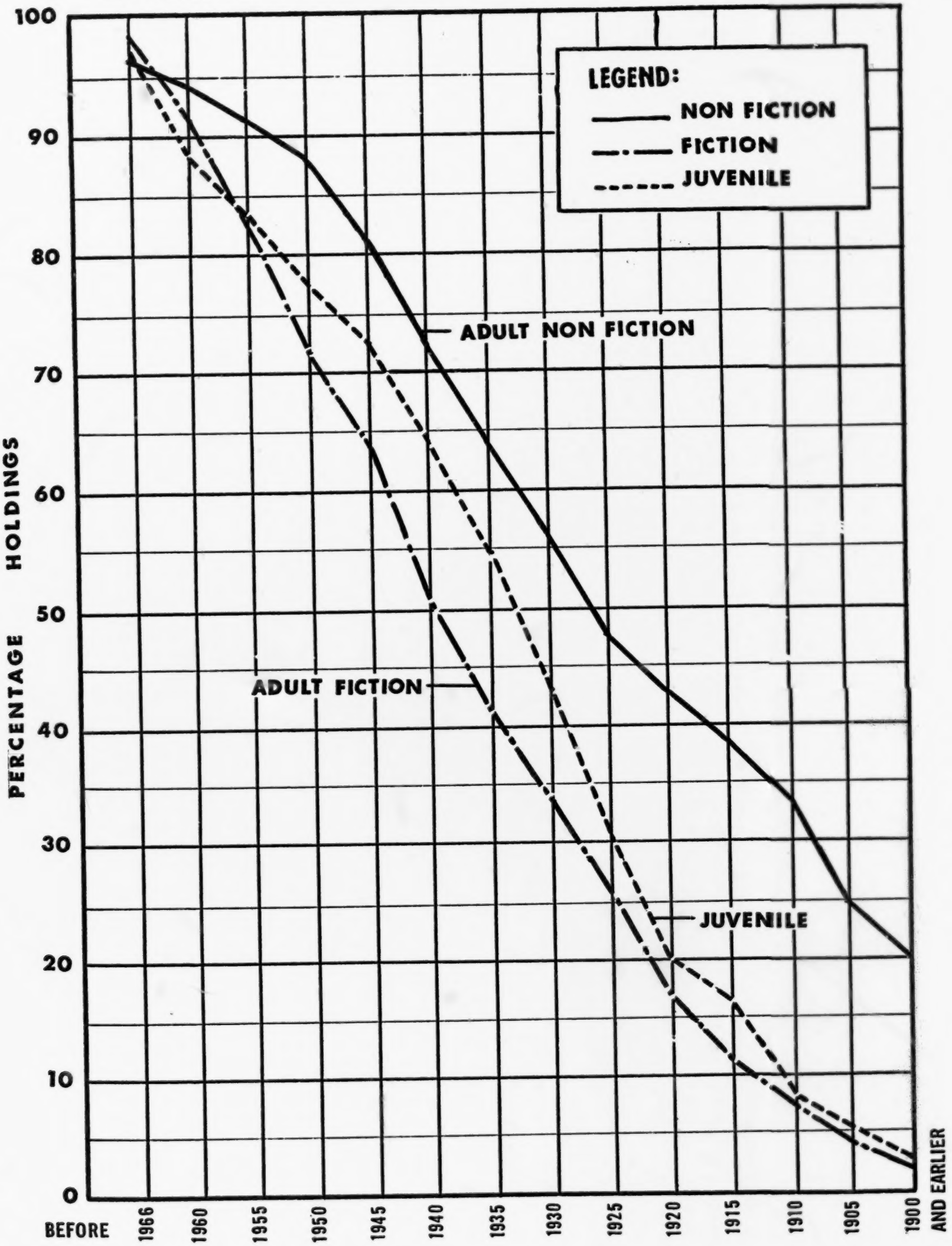
LIBRARY H - DATE DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIONS



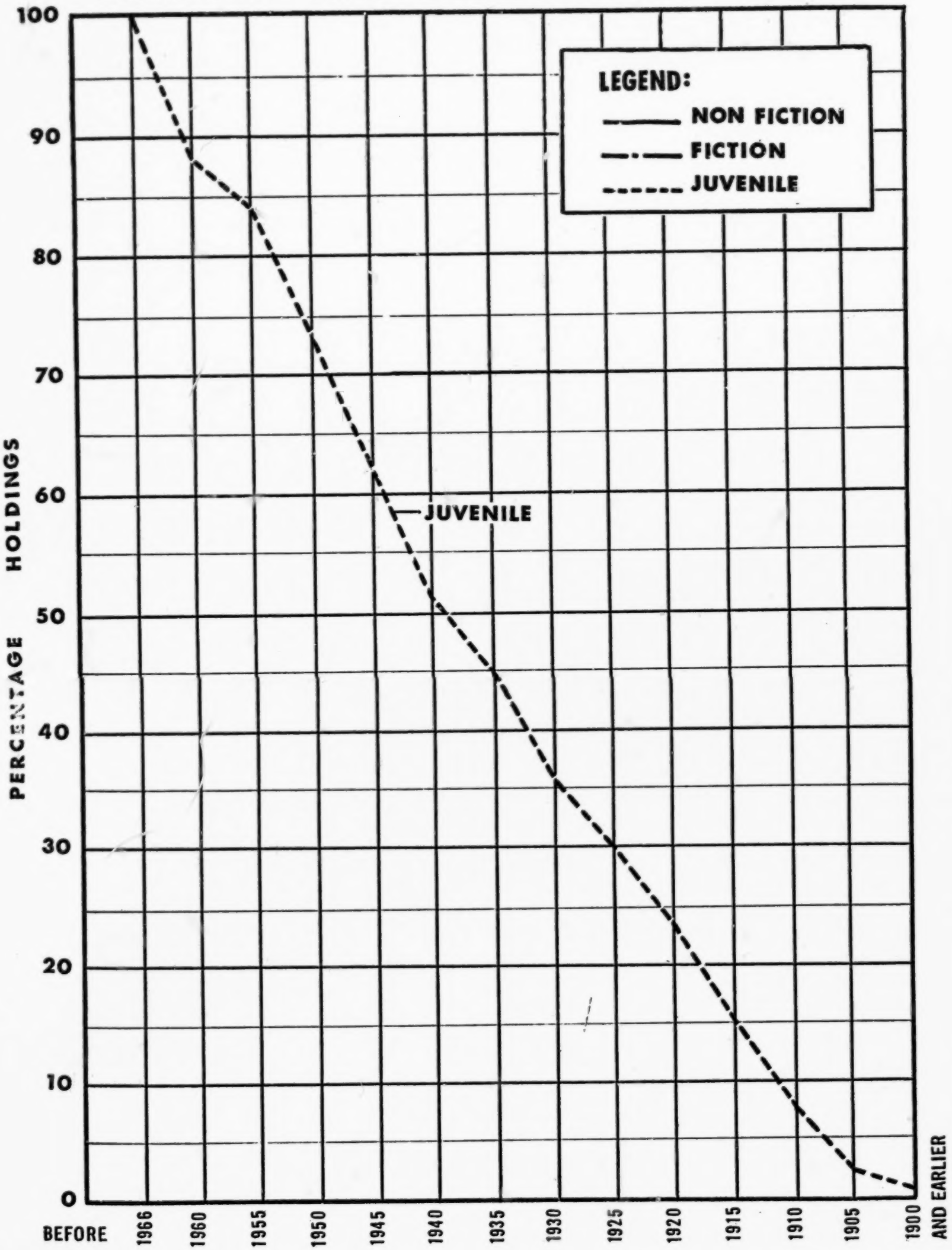
LIBRARY J - DATE DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIONS



LIBRARY K - DATE DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIONS



LIBRARY L - DATE DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIONS



SUBJECT DISTRIBUTION

It is possible for a library to have a skewed date distribution curve and still have new titles to satisfy current informational needs and interests. The information supplied in the last section has to be supplemented by an analysis by subject distribution to understand the severity of the problem posed by the collections in the Pottsville Library District.

Adult Collections

Table 2 presents a percentage breakdown of the adult book collections by each Dewey classification for nine local libraries and the Pottsville District Library Center. (Two libraries in the district could not be included because their collections are not classified.) This analysis follows the pattern established by Dr. Beasley in his analysis of the subject distribution of ten Pennsylvania public libraries.[11] The median percentage for each Dewey classification resulting from that investigation is included in the Table to provide a point of comparison. (The median may not be used as a norm because the total number of libraries (10) is small and we are not sure these are representative.)

From an inspection of some of Beasley's data, it appears that the percent-

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11. Op. cit., p. 17.

TABLE 2

Percentage Distribution of Adult Book Collection by Dewey Classification
for the Public Libraries in the Pottsville Library District,
with median based on 10 other Pennsylvania libraries, tabulated for another study

	Median	Pottsville	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	K
Fiction	37.2	22.2	51.9	59.1	56.2	53.1	31.3	72.7	63.3	40.6	46.4
Non-Fic.											
000	.75	.7	.3	.2	.2	.2	.5	.2	.3	.3	.3
100	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.2	.6	.8	.8	1.3	1.0	1.5	2.2
200	2.65	3.1	1.6	2.0	1.3	1.6	2.9	1.3	1.4	5.0	4.4
300	6.8	6.2	4.0	4.7	3.2	4.0	12.1	2.6	4.7	6.8	6.9
400	.55	.9	.8	.6	.1	.7	3.0	.6	1.0	.9	1.0
500	3.05	3.4	1.7	3.0	2.8	2.1	6.1	2.6	2.5	3.9	3.4
600	5.5	5.4	4.4	2.6	4.4	3.5	6.1	1.8	4.9	5.3	4.7
700	4.4	6.9	2.9	2.0	2.0	3.0	1.2	1.0	2.4	3.1	1.7
800	8.8	11.3	8.5	6.7	4.5	5.7	13.2	3.7	5.4	5.7	11.0
900	21.2	24.9	17.8	14.0	15.9	16.0	21.2	9.3	11.0	15.9	16.3
Reference	5.15	10.9	4.7	3.9	8.8	9.3	1.6	2.9	2.1	11.0	1.7
No. of vol.	19,372	59,009	6,208	8,261	4,431	3,538	8,314	2,166	12,087	11,347	7,496

age of adult fiction in a library collection declines as the adult collection grows in total size. The below-median showing of the Pottsville fiction collection is probably a reflection of total size (59,009 adult non-fiction volumes as of Summer, 1965) rather than conscious development of the Library's role in the community. Inspection of the collection reveals a large number of titles, many light love and mystery stories, many very old titles, and many book-club edition duplicates, apparently donated.

Table 2 is self-explanatory. However, the information presented in it must be read with knowledge of a particular collection and the objectives of the library.

Science Collections

Table 3 presents the date distribution for the science holdings of the libraries in the Pottsville District, together with the date distribution of starred science titles listed in the Standard Catalog for Public Libraries. Summarizing the data in this Table, we find that:

Two libraries have collections with at least 50% of the items copyrighted within the most recent five-year interval. (The collections in these two libraries, plus two others, show a higher percentage of titles in the 1961-1966 time period than does the Standard Catalog for Public Libraries. It must be noted again that the basic volume of that Catalog was issued in 1958, and also that the number of starred science titles in the Catalog is larger than the number of science volumes held by three of these four libraries. Thus, Library D which shows 50% of

TABLE 3

Percentage of Science books held by age distribution

Library	In last 5 years 1961-66	In last 10 years 1956-66	1955 or earlier	1950 or earlier	1940 or earlier	1925 or earlier	Number of volumes
Pottsville	12.1	21.7	78.3	71.0	50.2	24.0	1,768
A	9.4	15.6	69.7	68.6	35.4	19.7	98
B	36.0	50.8	46.0	38.8	24.8	10.8	249
C	56.4	89.7	10.3	7.7	2.6	0	125
D	50.0	64.8	35.1	32.4	16.2	2.7	74
E		8.0	92.0	88.0	78.0	56.0	500
F			92.8	89.2	77.0	49.0	57
G	19.0	27.2	70.7	63.2	48.3	27.2	302
H	35.9	45.2	54.6	40.6	34.3	21.8	448
K	6.0	6.0	90.0	86.0	74.0	46.0	250
Standard Catalog*	24.2	50.0	49.6	19.6	5.4	.3	329

*Starred titles listed in the Standard Catalog for Public Libraries

its science collection in the latest five-year time period actually has only 37 volumes as compared with 79 in the Standard Catalog for this period. On the other hand, Library H with a 35.9% showing has 159 volumes for this time period.)

Two libraries have no science books published within the most recent five-year interval; one lacks books published within the last ten-year interval.

In six libraries, more than two-thirds of the science books are copyrighted 1955 or earlier (more than 10 years ago).

These six libraries hold more science materials copyrighted before 1925 (more than 40 years ago) than materials copyrighted since 1960.

In short, in a field where the rate of progress and change has been almost incredible, the majority of books available in the Pottsville Library District are old enough that they probably contain misinformation, or at least outmoded concepts. In some localities, the reader turning to his public library for information will find an iron curtain on all scientific discoveries since the development of Sputnik.

Literature Collections

In the field of literature, one would expect the collections to reflect older copyright dates. But even here, new editions of classic literature will often be issued with new copyright dates. The date distribution of titles starred in the Standard Catalog for Public Libraries reflects this fact. As seen in Table 4, the literature collections of most of these libraries are considerably older than is suggested by analysis of that Catalog. While the reader in the Pottsville Library District will find the classics represented in his local library, generally he will

TABLE 4

Percentage of Literature books held by age distribution

Library	In last 5 years 1961-66	In last 10 years 1956-66	1955 or earlier	1950 or earlier	1940 or earlier	1925 or earlier	Number of volumes
Pottsville	2.0	6.0	94.0	90.1	80.8	45.6	4,746
A	4.3	8.7	75.6	73.9	51.3	37.4	523
B	7.6	16.7	71.3	68.6	56.2	35.1	550
C	16.1	32.2	67.8	64.3	57.3	37.5	190
D	22.6	33.1	62.8	51.7	27.1	13.6	199
E	0	0	94.3	89.0	80.1	71.2	1,090
F	0	0	92.5	92.5	48.1	25.9	81
G	3.9	6.4	71.8	64.5	44.3	28.0	654
H	22.0	28.0	72.0	64.0	48.0	14.0	650
K	0	0	92.8	92.8	87.4	67.3	825
Standard Catalog*	14.0	36.3	63.5	45.5	21.1	7.0	520

*Starred titles listed in the Standard Catalog for Public Libraries

be deprived of the benefits of modern scholarship to be found in important new editions and critical interpretations.

A further examination of Table 4 reveals that three libraries hold no titles copyrighted within the latest five or even ten-year interval. The reader will almost certainly find Longfellow on these library shelves, but not Roethke; he may find Chekhov, Ibsen and O'Neill, but he will not find Albee, Beckett or Ionesco. Although currency in the field of literature is not critical, per se, the gaps in coverage of modern works become critical. Here is a point at which checking of special lists will be particularly helpful to supplement the date-subject distribution study.

Religious Collections

Religion is another field in which older materials retain value, and the date distribution of the collection should reflect this fact. At the same time, many new discoveries, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, have brought about new interpretations and the impact of social change and upheaval has exerted revolutionary changes in this field, as much as any other.

Table 5 presents the date distribution of the religious collections. In view of the small size offered by the starred titles in the Standard Catalog for Public Libraries in this subject field and the even smaller size of many of these collections, the percentage of current titles held must be related to the number of volumes held. Library C and Library D, for example, exceed the "norm" in percentage of titles held for the 1961-1966 time period, but the percentage

TABLE 5

Percentage of Religious books held by age distribution

Library	In last 5 years 1961-66	In last 10 years 1956-66	1955 or earlier	1950 or earlier	1940 or earlier	1925 or earlier	Number of volumes
Pottsville	4.2	8.0	92.0	86.7	70.8	51.5	1,541
A	4.3	19.4	69.1	52.9	31.3	21.6	94
B	19.8	34.0	58.9	50.8	34.7	27.9	163
C	26.3	36.8	63.2	47.4	10.6	5.3	61
D	26.7	42.7	55.2	35.6	14.2	1.8	56
E		9.1	90.9	84.8	66.7	54.5	231
F	3.6	17.8	78.6	75.0	67.8	53.6	28
G	5.4	12.0	78.6	69.6	52.8	27.6	172
H	29.8	42.0	56.0	33.2	15.8	8.8	570
K	3.0	6.1	88.2	86.6	74.5	51.7	330
Standard Catalog*	19.8	52.2	47.4	28.8	7.2		166

*Starred titles listed in the Standard Catalog for Public Libraries

represents only about 15 volumes. Relating percentage to number of volumes, it is apparent from Table 5 that the majority of libraries in the Pottsville District are failing to provide current materials in the field of religion. One library has no recent titles and four others offer less than a dozen items copyrighted within the latest five-year interval. The adult reader seeking information on the ecumenical movement, the changes taking place at the Vatican, the "Honest to God" debate, or the young person who might be stimulated by some of the new attitudes and fresh approaches beginning to appear in the literature, will not be served by these libraries.

The low percentage holding of titles copyrighted in the 1956-1960 time period, compared with the Standard Catalog, suggests that the collections ought to be checked for gaps in holdings. At the same time, the very high percentage holding of older materials (1940 or earlier, and 1925 or earlier) suggests that the older items in these collections should be reviewed to be sure they still have validity and usefulness.

Social Sciences Collections

As a last example, Table 6 presents the date distribution of holdings in the Dewey 300 classification, generally labeled "social sciences." As in the natural sciences, this is a field in which rapid change and development has taken place and, of course, this classification includes the area of "current affairs." Both the rate of change and the public interest in this area are reflected in the publishers' output.

TABLE 6

Percentage of Social Sciences books held by age distribution

Library	In last 5 years 1961-66	In last 10 years 1956-66	1955 or earlier	1950 or earlier	1940 or earlier	1925 or earlier	Number of volumes
Pottsville	8.8	13.4	86.4	78.8	54.8	29.7	3,063
A	14.8	21.5	70.8	67.7	37.2	14.8	233
B	31.0	46.8	49.5	42.5	26.8	11.5	292
C	55.5	66.6	33.4	22.3			144
D	79.3	80.5	18.2	12.6	4.9	2.1	143
E	6.0	12.0	88.0	83.0	70.0	49.0	1,000
F		1.8	98.2	94.6	83.7	43.7	55
G	12.4	23.6	75.0	61.4	32.9	5.0	565
H	45.2	49.0	50.3	43.9	27.1	5.2	770
K	1.9	7.7	90.2	84.5	65.3	46.1	520
Standard Catalog*	29.8	62.4	36.9	11.9	4.7	1.1	414

*Starred titles listed in the Standard Catalog for Public Libraries

In view of this, it is a bit startling to note the Pottsville Library's low percentage holding of titles copyrighted in the 1961-1966 time period. In this instance, the acquisitions level reflects a conscious policy decision not to purchase books in the field of "current affairs." That policy was changed, in a change of personnel, at the end of 1964.

Two libraries in the District have collections containing a majority of books (over 50%) copyrighted within the latest five-year interval. Again, the small size of these collections distorts the picture. Only Library H, with a larger collection and a holding of 45.2% for this time period, can be said to offer a relatively good supply of current materials in this field.

Well over two-thirds of the collections in six libraries consist of books copyrighted 1955 or earlier. In four of these libraries, including Pottsville, over 80% of the social sciences materials are copyrighted 1955 or earlier, in contrast with 36.9% for the Standard Catalog.

In three libraries, over 40% of the collections consist of materials copyrighted 1925 or earlier--or more than 40 years ago. The percentage of titles in this time period held by the Pottsville Library (29.7%) reflects a point of strength in the Library's collection of folklore material.

In fields of rapid change, such as science and technology or the social sciences, the most up-to-date and therefore useful information is found in such publications as periodicals, technical reports, research reports and publications of societies and other organizations. At the time the Pottsville Library's collection was surveyed, the periodical collection consisted mainly of general popular titles, and the Library had not developed an acquisitions program for securing

materials in non-book form other than in the small area of the anti-poverty program.

Analysis of the data gathered on the collections in the other subject areas yields the same pattern illustrated in the four fields discussed here. Generally, the public libraries in the Pottsville District offer little in the way of current subject materials. A few libraries hold a high percentage of recent works, but the effect is offset by the small size of the collections. This situation reinforces the need for the patrons of these small libraries to have access to the resources of a larger central collection.

APPLICATION

A few simple calculations may be applied to any collection to estimate the expenditure necessary to bring the collection to the desirable levels set forth in this report. These calculations have been worked out for one local library in the Pottsville District to provide an illustration not only of method but also the magnitude of the problem suggested by this application. Library B has been selected for this example because it is one of the larger and older established libraries in the district, follows a careful selection policy, and at the same time is neither decidedly good nor decidedly bad in terms of age and subject distribution of the collection.

1. Determine the total size of book stock necessary to meet State Standards.

   Applying the present (1958) standard of 1 volume per capita, Library B should have 14,181 volumes. The standards specify a collection of 6,000 volumes for smaller communities.

2. Determine appropriate distribution of book stock by broad categories, adult non-fiction, adult fiction and juvenile, as these relate to the role and objectives of the library.

   (Note: Further stratification of adult and juvenile non-fiction collections should be worked into this calculation if norms for distribution can be determined.)

   The present percentage distribution of adult non-fiction (including reference) in Library B is 33%. The Librarian believes that this distribution should be increased to the 40% level.

Example of Method and Cost Factors
Application of Recommended Standards for Age Distribution of Collection: LIBRARY B

ACQUISITION

Collection and Present Size	Recommended Size and Distribution		Recommended holdings copyrighted within last ten years		Library holdings copyrighted in last ten years (Volumes)	Needed Acquisitions (Volumes)	Average Cost per Volume	Total Cost
	%	Volumes	%	Volumes				
Adult Non-Fiction 3447 (36%)	40	5672	75-90	4254-5105	1228	3026-3877	$6.00	$18,156-23,262
Adult Fiction 4883 (51%)	45	6382	52	3319	945	2374	$4.52	$10,730
Juvenile 1250 (15%)	15	2127	45	957	705	252	$3.46	$ 871
								$29,758-34,864

WEEDING

Collection and Present Size	Recommended Size and Distribution		Recommended holdings copyrighted prior to 1956		Library holdings copyrighted prior to 1956 (Volumes)	Weeding Estimation (Volumes)	Average Cost per Volume	Total Cost
	%	Volumes	%	Volumes				
Adult Non-Fiction 3447 (36%)	40	5672	10-25	567-1418	2219	1652-801		
Adult Fiction 4883 (51%)	45	6382	48	3063	3938	875		
Juvenile 1250 (15%)	15	2127	55	1169	545			

Library B is experiencing a marked decrease in use of the juvenile collection as a result of the recent build-up of school library resources in that community. Until a redefinition of role and objectives is formulated, the Librarian suggests that the present percentage distribution of children's materials should be used. The tentative distribution formula for Library B works out to:

Adult non-fiction and reference.....40%
Adult fiction.....45%
Juvenile fiction and non-fiction 15%

(Note: In smaller libraries, with collections of 6,000 volumes and under, the percentage of adult non-fiction might be dropped as low as 10% to reflect the different role of the very small agency.)

3. On the basis of (1) and (2) above, determine the number of volumes necessary to meet the "norms" tentatively adopted for the purpose of this study:

Adult non-fiction. .75%-90% within last ten years
Adult fiction..... 52% within last ten years
Juvenile ..... 45% within last ten years

4. Subtract the number of volumes of appropriate date the library presently holds from the above ranges.

5. The difference is the number of volumes needed to achieve the level suggested in this report. This difference multiplied by the average cost per volume will give a cost range.

6. The same type formula applied to the remainder of the book stock may result in a positive difference (surplus of volumes), and the amount of weeding necessary will fall somewhere within the range indicated by this positive difference.

(Note: The cost of weeding--i.e., actually selecting and removing items from the collection--should also be added to get a complete picture of cost. This cost factor will vary widely from library to library, and even from one classification to another within one library. Variants include the salary level of the librarian reviewing the collection, the number of entry cards to be removed from the catalog, salary and performance rate of clerical staff. Thus, the costs of weeding have not been calculated here.)

The data presented for Library B, page 62, indicates a cost range (excluding cost of weeding) of $29,758 to $34,864 to effect a desirable date distribution level. When one puts the problem this way, recalling that there are over 400 public libraries in the state, or even that there are 305 libraries receiving state aid, it seems entirely unlikely that expenditures of this magnitude could be covered by the state at the present rate of aid. The problem is very much larger, in scope and scale, than has yet been suggested.

PART FOUR

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

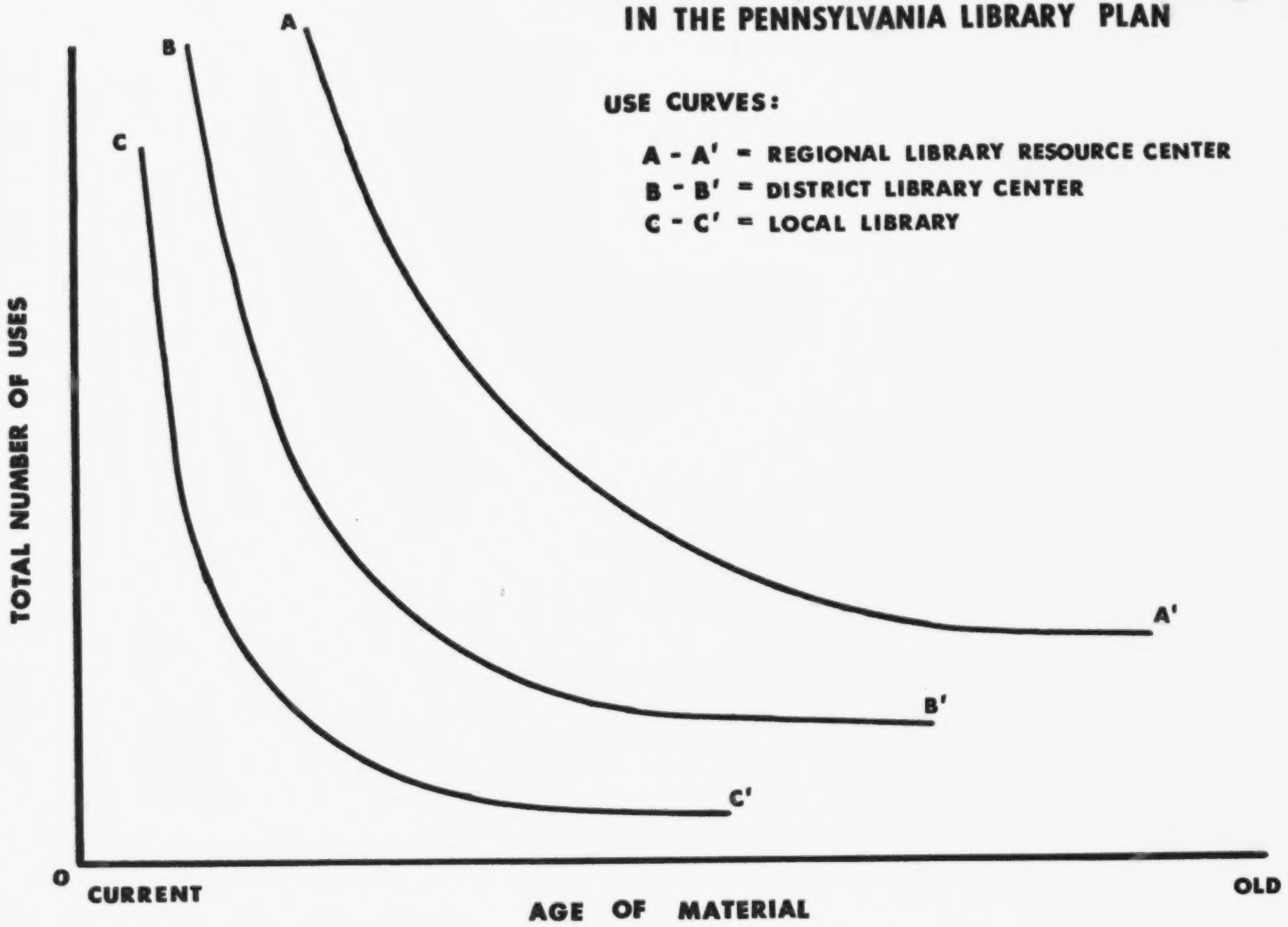
As indicated earlier in this report, it has been demonstrated that, in general, frequency of use of books and journals declines with the passage of time. Furthermore, there is at least some evidence that incorporating new materials in a mass of old materials results in a total use of a library collection lower than may be experienced when new and old materials are separated.

Pennsylvania System and Theoretical Use Curves

The fact of obsolescence provides one of the bases of the Pennsylvania Library Plan. In order to conceive of a pyramid of public libraries, with several hundred local libraries making up the first layer, thirty District Library Centers the second, and four Regional Library Resource Centers the third, it is necessary to take the position that most libraries will not need to keep all the materials they acquire, to say nothing of attempting to cover all subject areas in depth. It may help in understanding the possible advantages of the system of libraries envisioned in the Pennsylvania Library Plan to think of three "use curves" (in effect, curves of obsolescence) rather than a pyramid of libraries.

A curve representing total library use, plotting total number of uses against age of material would have the general character of curve A-A' in Graph 13 (page 66). While use of the Regional Resource Library Center by no means

THEORETICAL USE CURVES OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES
IN THE PENNSYLVANIA LIBRARY PLAN



USE CURVES:

A - A' = REGIONAL LIBRARY RESOURCE CENTER
B - B' = DISTRICT LIBRARY CENTER
C - C' = LOCAL LIBRARY

GRAPH 13

represents total library use, the two may be thought of for the moment as being synonymous. These Resource Centers have relatively large collections covering many subjects in greater depth than other libraries in the system. The use of their collections, at least in theory, is extended to all the residents of Pennsylvania. Their audience is then potentially quite large. It should be pointed out here that this A-A' type of use curve, extending far into the past, exists because a large number of books, journals, government publications and other items have been preserved for a long time. Very few items from, say, 1880 will be used in 1967; being able to satisfy those few requests requires that a rather large number of 1880 items exist in organized collections. This curve then cannot be "tailored" or "managed" to nearly the same extent as can B-B' and C-C'. That is, the use curve and the collection curve cannot be made to conform, even roughly.

The District Library Centers probably have use curves similar to the curve B-B' in Graph 13. Not as great a total demand is made of the District Library Center collections either as to quantity or age as is the case in A-A'. This curve, B-B', could be managed to some degree. If the Regional Center concept really works--that is, if the system is not impeded by program, communications and individual failures--District Library Center boards could determine not to keep materials older than x date. Of course, this decision would have to be made up of many subordinate decisions relating to various subjects or types of material based on objectively collected facts regarding use of the library, including experimental programs. It should be noted that items taken from the District Library Centers could be passed on for final disposition to the State Library where,

by various devices, a "last copy discard" system could be put into effect.

Curve C-C' is probably characteristic of the use curve for many local libraries where weeding of the collection has been rigorously carried out. The use curve in a particular library will, willy-nilly, be to some degree a function of the collection. To some degree, what is in the collection will circulate. Thus, a small library with a collection curve such as that for Library E may not produce a use curve approximate to C-C'. However, this will be the easiest curve to tailor or manage because (1) the collections are relatively small and can be changed (theoretically, at least) readily and (2) a District Library Center and the four Regional Library Resource Centers are given state funds to supply materials needed but not held by local libraries.

Now, it should be possible, given some degree of acceptance of these ideas, to define the roles of the three types of libraries as to collections and functions with some considerable degree of accuracy. Furthermore, if collection curves can be tailored (or at least more nearly matched) to use curves, then certain maximum service and savings can be approached. For one reason, the needless storage of hundreds (perhaps thousands) of books in hundreds of local libraries could be achieved.

One of the observations of the surveyors which should be noted here is that persuading librarians and board members to discard books is a most difficult job. Quite possibly, remote selection of items to be discarded (as in a computerized union catalog operation perhaps) might be helpful.

It should help also to develop a mature standard taking into account one or more norms which could be represented by a curve or several curves. Then,

plotting the collection curve of an individual library and comparing it with the norm(s), one could demonstrate the number of items by age category which would have to be weeded in order to meet the standard.

Generally speaking, one should not distinguish between one major part of a collection and another by saying that it is all right for one to be older than another. That is, an adult non-fiction collection, if it is generally outdated, probably contains information which is incomplete or incorrect in virtually every field covered. The facts supplied in an earlier section support this statement. Those few libraries which show relatively good date distribution curves for the non-fiction collection as a whole also show up well in the four subjects analyzed, although the provision of current materials is limited by the small size of the collections. By the same token, libraries with poor date distribution curves for the whole collection consistently show very low, and even zero, percentages in holdings of recent subject materials.

While it is likely that some adults may wish to read older materials and they may find some pleasure in that, if the role of the library is to supply information out of this collection as well as recreation, then a "dated" non-fiction collection cannot be excused. Similarly, an adult fiction collection may contain many titles which adult readers may regard with pleasant nostalgia. The temper of the times, however, is reflected in today's imaginative literature. Thus the most recent books will always, and for very good reason, be most in demand. The older titles of lasting value or interest are in many cases reprinted. Thus the two factors of reflection of current times and reissues of older titles make it impossible to excuse a collection consisting largely of old, physically

unattractive books. The older titles which are not in constant demand will always be available under the Pennsylvania Plan. In the interests of economy, these older materials ought to be made available through book catalogs and book lists issued by the Regional Resource Centers.

Some Characteristics of a Statement of Standards for Collections

It appears that a statement of standards for book collections in a system of public libraries such as Pennsylvania's should provide for:

1. Definition of "level of service" for the whole system.
2. Suggestion as to what role individual libraries at the several levels contribute to the availability of materials.
3. Suggested role definitions which any library might use in developing its own role.
4. Date distribution of collections at various levels of service.
5. Methods by which subject distribution may be related to roles and levels of service.
6. Norm established for date and subject distribution by analysis of selection tools and the exercise of the best professional judgment.
7. Formulae to be used in insuring that collections will continue to adhere to the norms established for them.
8. Recommendation as to size which can be derived from all above criteria again supplemented by professional judgment.

Recommendations

1. It is clear from this analysis that too little knowledge of book collections was at hand when the original Pennsylvania Plan was devised. The true situation of many, probably most, of the libraries designated as District Library Centers with respect to ability to offer book services was not clearly revealed by the statistical information then available.

Now, it need not be inferred that this condition of old collections and limited subject coverage is unique. It is probably characteristic of library collections generally--certainly of medium-sized and small public libraries in the Northeastern United States. If it is characteristic, that condition must be laid at the feet of (1) local library managers; (2) the profession of librarianship; and (3) the State libraries for failing to provide more revealing information. Now certainly this situation can be corrected. Some steps which might be followed are:

A. Conduct investigations similar to this one to verify the findings.

B. Develop close estimates of the dimensions of the problems.

C. Develop mature standards for collections.

D. Upon experience, develop selection and processing lists and methods so as to make maximum use of repetition of actions.

E. Implement the actual rejuvenation of collections (and their future maintenance) through a continuous State Library-District Library Center program.

The progress which has been made over the past two years in rejuvenating the Pottsville collection as a result of the expenditure of a great deal of profes-

sional time on the part of the District Center staff and of the State Library in supplying grant funds to purchase new material suggests that this is an appropriate area of activity for future federal and/or state funds, over and above the regular state plan expenditures. Many districts within the state like Pottsville will suffer from the sins of the past. Overcoming these really is essential before any long-term evaluation of the Pennsylvania Plan could be made.

II. The very rapid weeding which has gone on at Pottsville since this study was initiated suggests that there should be a last copy retention program within the state. This program should make it possible for a District Center librarian, or perhaps any librarian engaged in extensive weeding, to notify the State Library or the Union Library Catalog that certain titles were being considered for withdrawal. The notification should take place rapidly and the reply to it should take as little time as possible so that the weeding process would not be held up. In this manner then, the State Library might shift books from one place to another if they are of some particular value rather than merely have them discarded and run the risk that some other library may be attempting to buy those very items. This system would have to work quickly and would have to be financed adequately so that it would not clog the libraries with materials which they really wanted to withdraw but had to hold until they were notified as to what to do with them. This last copy program should not be limited to public libraries but should certainly include all state colleges and possibly private colleges and universities too.

III. The investigation of the Pottsville library collection also suggests that either a subject specialist or a variety of specialists, hired either temporarily to

work on this collection or hired more or less permanently by the State Library with the intention of having them work with each of the Districts, would be constructive. It should be possible for a subject specialist to come into a library such as many of the District Centers represent and make some suggestions within a few days as to whether or not the collection in his area needs radical weeding and also to make up a list of landmark items which should be purchased immediately. A subject specialist at this stage could assist in bringing a collection more or less up to date within his field in a very much shorter time then can the single District Library Center librarian who has a great many administrative problems of all kinds. The subject specialist could also define guidelines for selection for each District Center. These guidelines would probably vary from one district to another. They would have some common core, of course, but in detail they should differ from one part of the state to another.

IV. It appears in this area which has suffered economic reverses that the existence of a library in the community--not the theoretical access to a large stock of books remotely located--is a matter of great local pride. It is possible that this area is different from others in this respect, and if it is different, that may be attributable to the fact that these communities have relatively few institutions which may be classified generally as cultural and/or educational. This fact, in addition to the data presented on both age and subject distribution of the collections, points up the need to develop some statement of role for the very small library which cannot approach supplying materials for all interest and age levels.

For some of these libraries, the role might be related to children's books

plus a few rigidly-selected reference titles and possibly adult best sellers. The surveyors suggest that libraries in the Pottsville District with annual book budgets of less than $2400 will want to consider a definition of role along these lines.(12)

Another group of libraries are so small and have such limited funds that without being part of a system they cannot satisfy even this limited role. The number of such libraries is small and the number of persons affected is also small. Each District Center will deal with these libraries in its own way. Plans for the Pottsville District Center should include rotating collections, heavily weighted with materials at the ninth-grade reading level, and direct mail service especially suited to these localities.

V. Collections within the District should be built up and coordinated as a system, with as nearly as possible a distinct separation between local and district levels of service. According to the Pennsylvania Plan, district library centers will have larger collections providing a greater range and depth of subject materials than would generally be provided at the local level, and they will keep material for longer periods of time, though not indefinitely. Each district center should define these levels by range, subject distribution and the degree to which each subject covered in the collection will be developed. Initially, criteria

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12. The $2400 figure was arrived at by taking the actual cost of titles recommended for purchase by the small public library in ALA's Booklist and Subscription Books Bulletin during the year 1966, and adding an additional $650 to allow for juvenile replacements, basic reference and periodical titles. The same budget level results if one uses the Pennsylvania Standard of a yearly acquisition rate of 500 titles for the small library, applying a distribution of 40% adult nonfiction, 60% adult fiction and children's books, with additional provision of $250 for reference and periodical titles.

might be developed by broad areas rather than attempting a definition for all possible subjects. One may find within these criteria different collection standards district by district. This planning should go forward, of course, with assistance and leadership from the State Library.

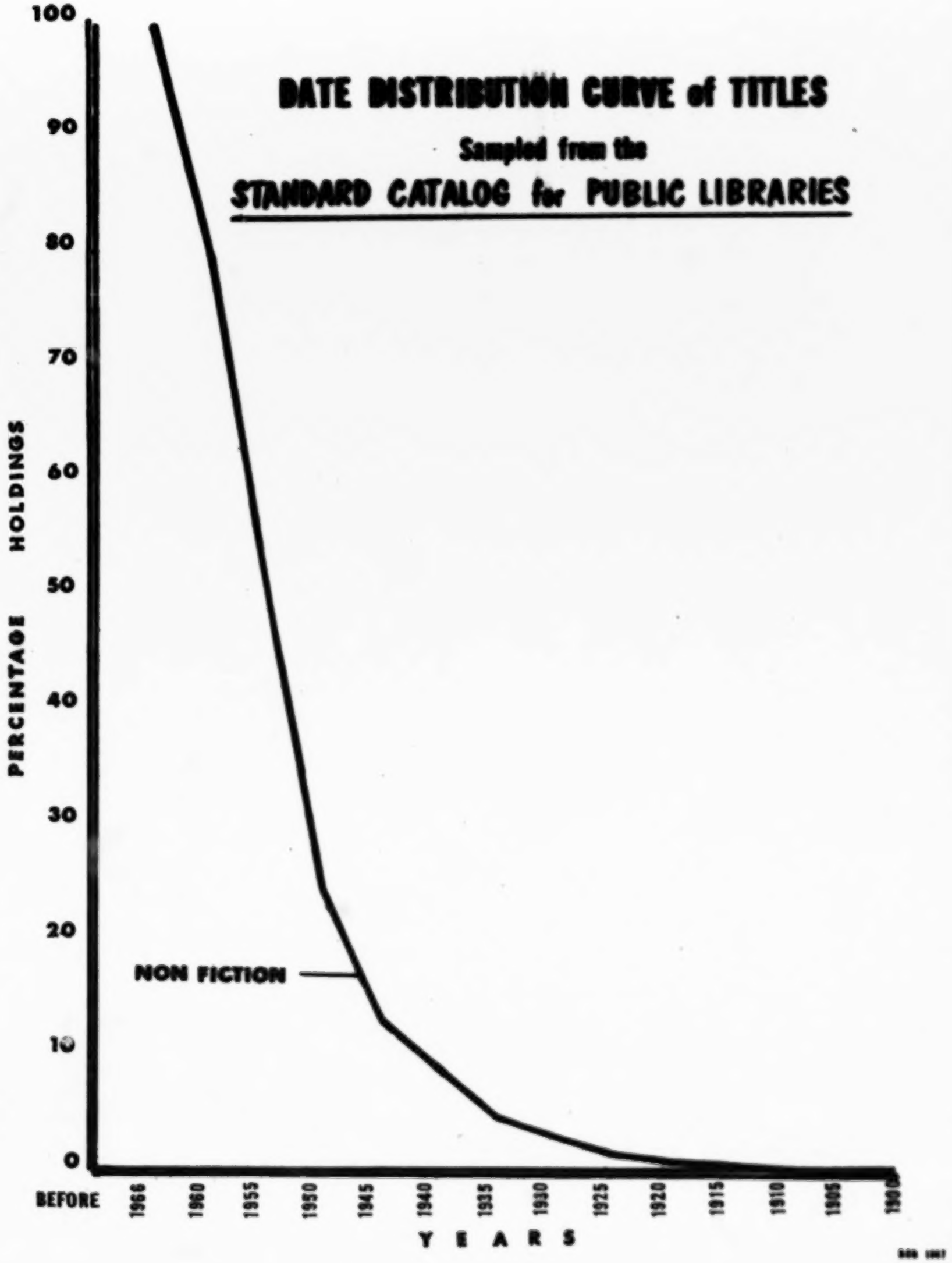
VI. With a substantial body of knowledge now available about the collections in all the public libraries within the District, the next logical step for the Pottsville District Center is to undertake a study relating to the examination of use of materials. The first phase of the study should be directed to an analysis of the level and nature of use made of the present collections. This would provide the District Center with a clear picture of actual demand at present. The second phase should be a series of experimental programs throughout the District to determine whether or not the use pattern of a library can be affected by changes in the book collection. It should be possible to set up controlled experiments to determine, for example, whether or not frequency of use is affected by age distribution of the collection, possibly its subject distribution and distribution by type of audience clientele. These use studies would contribute to a further definition of collection standards for the Pottsville District Library System.

GRAPH 14

DATE DISTRIBUTION CURVE of TITLES

Sampled from the

STANDARD CATALOG for PUBLIC LIBRARIES

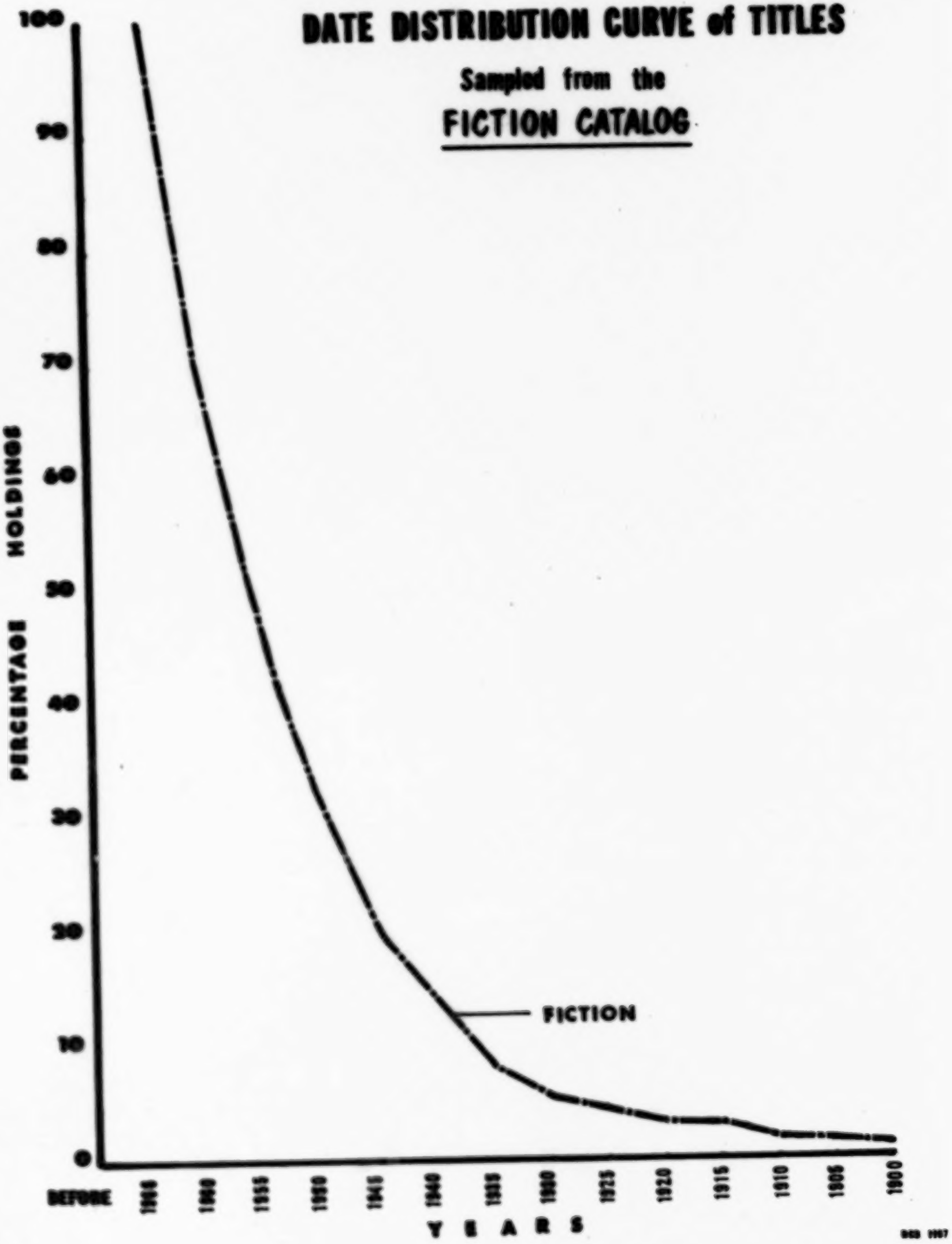


GRAPH 15

DATE DISTRIBUTION CURVE of TITLES

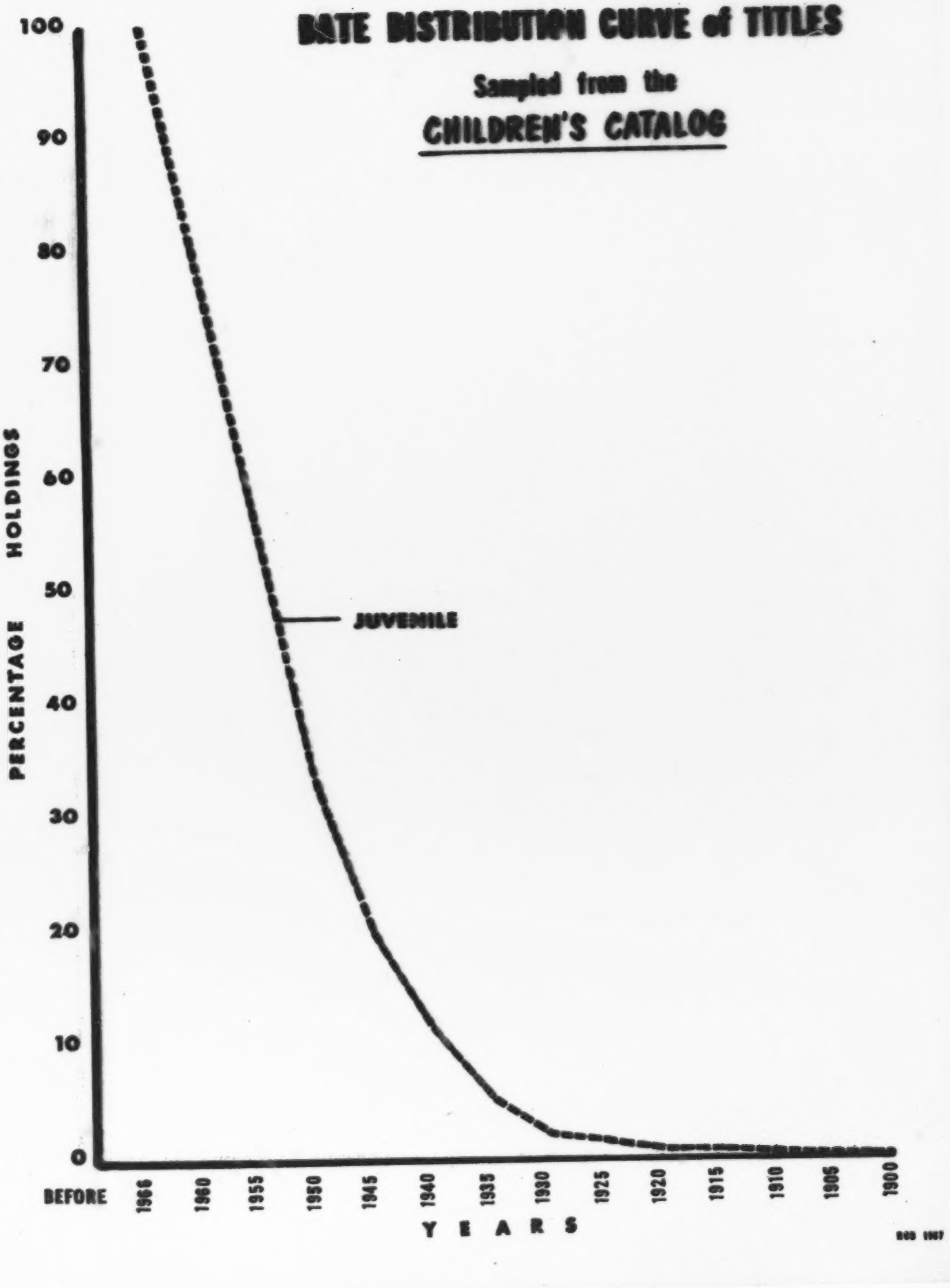
Sampled from the

FICTION CATALOG



GRAPH 16

DATE DISTRIBUTION CURVE of TITLES

Sampled from the

CHILDREN'S CATALOG